

'ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY TO COMMUNITY ACTION'

**METHODOLOGY AND APPROACHES IN COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN UGANDA**

THESIS

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By

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in Luwero, a rural district in central Uganda, over a period of three years, half of which entailed fulltime engagement in a participatory action research process with VEDCO, an indigenous NGO. The study focuses on the educational processes involved in the translation of Uganda's environmental policy into action at community level. It looks at community-based education and development activities run by VEDCO among smallholder farmers.

The study addressed four objectives. For the first objective I developed a conceptual framework through a review of theories informing education in general and environmental education, adult education, community education, and community development in particular. The second objective was to conduct a situational analysis to identify contextual issues related to policy implementation at community level. The third objective was to engage in a participatory action research process with the NGO in the farming community in response to the identified contextual issues, and the fourth was to explore and comment on environmental education methods used within a community context. PRA techniques, interviews, and other participatory data collection methods were used to generate the data.

The study reveals contradictions that limit NGO capacity to make appropriate use of participatory education processes in implementing policy-related training at community level. Elements in the National Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture, for example, conflicted with the principle of sustainable development underlying the policy. VEDCO itself was changing from a social-welfare-oriented organisation into a commercial enterprise pursuing economic goals, which conflicted with its social goals. The capitalist development ideology of the donor was being adopted by VEDCO, which contradicted the goals of people-centred development. This was exacerbated by VEDCO's dependency on donor funds for its activities. Contextual issues like people's history; poverty, gender and inconsistent land policies further complicated the policy implementation processes.

There were also inconsistencies in the epistemological assumptions and didactic approaches evident in the implementation. The study shows that the intended emancipatory education processes are more often supplanted by technicist methodologies. Thus, it exposes the underlying historical, ideological and epistemological tensions and contradictions within the field of education, particularly in relation to the 'paradigmatic' orientations (neo-classical, liberal and socially critical/emancipatory) outlined in the literature.

Conclusions are made at two levels: in relation to the study goals, of examining policy implementation at community level and in terms of the study's contribution to the understanding of current education theory in the context of sustainable development among communities.

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ACRONYMS

EA	Environmental Alert
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
G.o.U	Government of Uganda
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries
MFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NEMA	National Environmental Management Authority
NEPAD	the New Partnership for African Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RDDA	Research Develop Disseminate and Adopt
TOT	Training of Trainers
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UMA	Maghreb Union
UNAFA	Uganda National Farmers Association
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
VEDCO	Volunteers' Efforts for Develop Concerns
VIPP	Visualisation in Participatory Programmes

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY
1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is a Participatory Action Research (PAR) study on the implementation of Uganda's national environmental policy at community level¹. The research specifically focused on the educational processes, i.e. approaches and methodologies² used in the translation of the policy into action. Central to the study was the use of participatory learning methods and approaches recommended in the National Environmental Policy to respond to environmental and developmental problems in Uganda (MNR 1995, NEMA 1998a). The aim of the study was to establish how participatory methodologies recommended by the National Environmental Policy were being used in community-based environmental education and development programmes to achieve the national goal of sustainable development, within a community context.

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

My motivation to focus on the use of participatory methods and approaches in the policy implementation process within a community context resulted from three important factors, namely:

- a) Concerns, debates and contestations on the value and competencies associated with participation and participatory methods in community contexts, raised by people like Chambers, (1997), Freire (1970) and Mukherjee (1993) and also my personal experience in using them;
- b) My professional and academic interests in adult education and community development; and
- c) The Desire to engage with an NGO in a PAR process on a programme responding to a concrete agenda implied by the policy recommendation that NGOs be key implementers of the environmental policy at community level. These factors are elaborated below:

¹ In the Ugandan context, community level implies a political, geographical and social set-up at grass-root level, from the village local council to the sub-county.

People's participation has been recognised by different scholars (Cernea 1991, Chambers 1997, Dudley 1993) as an essential component in the design, implementation and evaluation of development programmes in rural community contexts, and this view was strongly echoed by Uganda's national environmental policy (G.O.U 1995a, MNR 1995 and NEMA 1998a). Nevertheless, concerns have also been raised about the uncritical adoption of participatory rhetoric that has not been substantiated by concrete results (Astrid 1998, Ellsworth 1989, Janse van Rensburg 1995, Lather 1991 Lotz 1996 and Mezirow 1990). Hence the question how could the principle of participatory learning in environmental and developmental education could be realised in practice? The study set out to explore this aspect of policy implementation.

Secondly, as a professional in the fields of adult education and development with a socially critical (see section 2.3.5) people-centred bias, I had spent all my ten years of working life teaching adult education, community education and development studies at Makerere University. During that period, I became involved in many community-based research and development projects, through which I gained experience in working with communities. Through this, I developed a desire to do research that would enhance my understanding of the use of participatory methodologies within community contexts and enable me contribute to ongoing debates on participatory methods and participatory development from a Ugandan-African perspective.

Thirdly, the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) included NGOs among the major implementers of the policy. This policy was based on the belief that NGOs possess superior capabilities in the technical aspects of community-based work and in the cultivation of conditions for people's participation at the local level, compared to government and other stakeholders (MNR 1995). Government saw indigenous community-based NGOs as important initiators of local projects and potential resource organisations, capable of offering specialised advice to NEMA. Government also saw NGOs as potential facilitators and mobilisers for environmental education and training in support of government programmes. While I did not dispute the potential of NGOs, I saw this as an overestimation of their capacity by government, and believed that their willingness to collaborate had been taken for granted. This view of NGOs as ready partners, willing to freely collaborate in policy implementation, seemed to have overshadowed the fact that these organisations were independent entities, with agendas of

² I have used methodology in this study to imply the actual educational/learning methods/processes employed in the policy implementation process together with the philosophies that inform them.

their own. The question thus became: Do the NGOs as key implementers of the environmental education activities in the communities have the capacity to translate policy into concrete action using the suggested participatory **methods** and their own resources, alongside their private agendas? The study also addressed this question. The three issues described above thus became my central motivation for undertaking this study.

1.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In addition to the main aim mentioned above, the study had four major objectives:

- 1) To derive an appropriate framework and conceptual tools for the analysis of findings, through a review of the literature on environmental, adult and development education;
- 2) To conduct a situational analysis of the selected communities to identify: a) contextual issues related to environmental and natural resource management; and b) how the NGO sector was responding to the environmental and developmental needs of the community through education.
- 3) To engage in a participatory action research process to establish how policy was playing out in the field;
- 4) To critically explore and comment on environmental education methods and approaches in a community context.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I chose a socially critical orientation (see section 2.3.5), which positions education and research as empowering forces that emancipate actors to take action on the basis of their enlightenment (Fien 1993, Carr and Kemmis 1986) to guide the study. I also chose PAR as the main methodology for the study. PAR is associated with critical emancipatory values, which had been echoed in the goals of Uganda's environmental policy (see section 1.3). The study was divided into two phases. Phase one consisted of a situational analysis to establish key baseline information about the context of the community. Phase two of the study was informed by the findings of phase one, and followed a participatory action research model (see section 3.2).

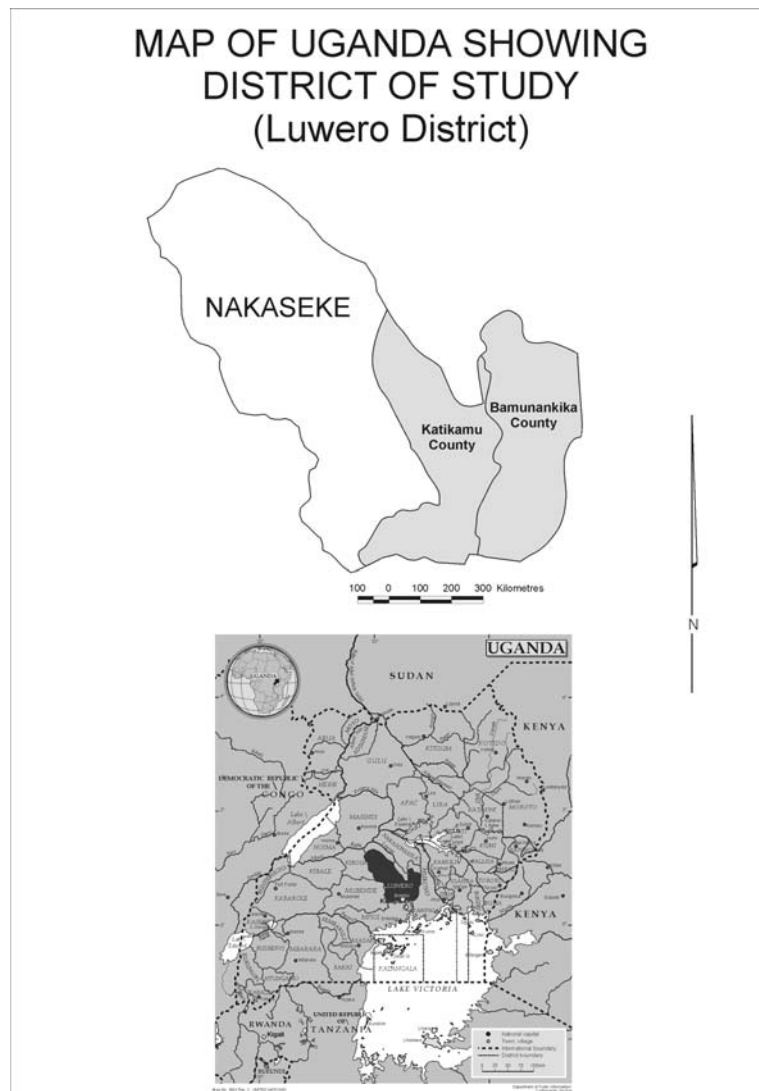
1.4 THE CONTEXT

1.4.1 Socio-economic development and the environmental crisis

The Ugandan government was awakened to a growing environmental catastrophe towards the end of the 1980s (MNR 1995, UNEP 1988). There were two interrelated trends that were becoming increasingly obvious namely: the impact of environmental degradation on the economy on one hand, and the impact of economic activities on the environment on the other and the need to respond was urgent. Available evidence showed an astounding annual loss of up to 12% of the national Gross Domestic Product [GDP] due to environmental degradation (Coverey 1992). In monetary terms, this was estimated to amount to a loss of \$170 - 460 million per annum (Slade and Weitz 1991).

1.4.2 Population growth

Uganda's population has almost trebled within a period of thirty years, from 9.5 million in 1969 to 24.6 million in 2002 (UBOS 2002). This has been despite the political turbulence that characterised the country during the period. The population density has increased by an incredible 528% within a period of seventy years, from a mere 18 people per sq km in 1931 to 113 people per sq km in 2000 (UBOS 2000). This has put pressure on the environment and natural resources (NEMA 2001). The increase in population led to scarcity of land and fragmentation that rendered traditional vegetative fallowing as a system for sustaining fertility, impossible (IITA 1990). The fragmentation has also been culturally motivated by the practice of sharing land among children at the death of their parents. This, coupled with poverty, resulted in a situation where entire households have to depend on very tiny plots of land, which they over-cultivate and exhaust beyond ecological recovery. Whilst close to 84% of Uganda's households are in the rural areas, 62% of such households own farms of less than one hectare (NEMA 2001)



Source: Department of international cartographic collection

Fig. 1.1 Map showing area of study, the country and location on the continent

1.4.3 Economic Development

Official government statistics show a steady decline in absolute poverty³, from over 50% of the population being defined as absolutely poor in 1986 to about 35% in 2000 (NEMA 2001). There has also been an unprecedented increase in 'economic growth' during the same period with an annual GDP growth rate of between 5% and 10% (MFPED 1998). Unfortunately, some of these achievements have resulted from unsustainable use of the resource base (Slade and Weitz 1991). Sadly too, the reported economic gains have not been fully reflected in the lives of the

³ Absolute poverty here refers to a state of living in which people are unable to meet their basic needs, including their daily food requirements.

common people. It has been reported that 25% of the people are unable to meet their daily food requirements and are living below the food poverty line,⁴ while more than 40% of the population are said to be living on less than \$ 1 a day. Whilst I do not wholly agree with the statistical categorisations and descriptions of poverty (see section 2.2), it is true that income disparities exist in the country, and that the so-called gains have not been even. This co-existence between poverty and growth may not only illustrate the inconsistencies in Uganda's approach to development, but also the limitations of equating development with economic growth and some of the criteria for measuring it (see section 2.2). In the case of the environment, more poverty has meant more pressure on the environment, since most of the poor live directly off the benefits of the land (NEMA 2001).

There has also been a clear shift in the structure of the economy in the last decade with the contribution of agriculture to the GDP decreasing from 51.1% in 1992 to 43.3% in 1997 (MFPED 1998). The decline of agriculture's contribution to the GDP has however, not brought about a decline in the percentage of people relying on the sector. At least 85% of the country's population still rely on agriculture as their main source of livelihood (MNR, 1995 NEMA 1998b 2001), which implies that the pressure on the resource base has remained great.

1.4.4 Further manifestations of the environmental crisis

The National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) noted in that nine out of every ten Ugandans make their living "from the products and services of the country's soil, water and biota" (MNR 1995:14). This implies that the majority of activities undertaken for development and livelihood activities have a direct impact on the environment.

Many environmental problems have emerged as a result of the processes associated with people's search for a livelihood, or economic gain. Major environmental problems include: land degradation, water pollution, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, diminishing wetlands, depletion of fish from the lakes and rivers, an energy crisis and diseases related to environmental degradation (MNR 1995).

Land degradation has been associated with soil erosion due to poor tillage practices, as a result of lack of proper knowledge and skills in land use and conservation practices. The levels

⁴ A minimum amount of money or resources a person requires to meet his/her daily food requirements.

of soil erosion range from 20% in the less eroded districts to 90% in the highly eroded districts (NEMA 2001). In the cattle-keeping areas, communal grazing, overstocking and dependency on natural pasture, have decreased the carrying capacity of land. The practices have contributed to an increase in different forms of soil erosion (UNEP 1992).

Water pollution has been exacerbated by the emission of industrial effluents, particularly by the breweries, textile, sugar and leather tanning industries along the shores of Lake Victoria and rivers (NEMA 2001). Soil erosion has also enhanced the pollution of lakes and rivers.

The national statistics also show a sharp increase in the impact of human activity on wetlands with a 99.3% increase in wetland area reclaimed since the 1960s (NEMA 2001). Over-fishing and the use of destructive fishing methods in lakes, rivers and wetlands have led to the depletion and near extinction of some fish species. Natural forests have been converted into farmland (NEMA 2001) and within the 20th century alone, national forest cover has been reduced from the original 45% of the country's surface area to a mere 21%. It was this scenario that led the government of Uganda to take key steps in the direction of developing a national environmental policy, towards the end of the 1980s

1.5 THE UGANDA NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

By the time of the 1992 Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Uganda had already embarked on a process to develop a national environmental policy, which involved the commissioning of national studies to assess the environmental situation (UNEP 1988). In 1992, Uganda participated in UNCED in Rio de Janeiro and committed itself to environmental protection by signing the various provisions, declarations and statements of principle. In 1994, the National Environmental Policy was passed, in line with the objectives of Agenda 21 (Quarrie 1992). The policy aims to ensure

Sustainable social and economic development which maintains or enhances environmental quality and resource productivity on a long term basis that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own (MNR 1995).

1.5.1 Key policy objectives

The National Environmental Policy (MNR 1995) outlines six objectives, which emphasise social, economic and environmental sustainability as the core of the development process, a holistic approach to environmental management and the importance of community participation in sustainable resource utilisation (MNR 1995:49):

1. Enhance health and quality of life of all Ugandans and promote long-term sustainable economic development through sound environmental and natural resource management and use;
2. Integrate environmental concerns in all development oriented policies, planning and activities at national, district and local levels, with participation of the people;
3. Conserve, preserve and restore ecosystems and maintain ecological processes and life support systems including conservation of national biological diversity;
4. Optimise resource use and achieve a sustainable level of resource consumption;
5. Raise public awareness to help understand and appreciate linkages between environment and development; and
6. Ensure individual and community participation in environmental improvement activities.

1.5.2 Environmental principles that informed policy

The policy was informed and guided by sixteen environmental principles adopted from the Rio Declaration (MNR 1995; Quarrie 1992). Whilst all the sixteen were important for the broad national policy, I found the five listed below most relevant to this study (MNR 1995:45-50):

- The development of Uganda should be based on sustainable natural resource use and sound management;
- Security of land and resource tenure is a fundamental requirement of sustainable natural resource management;
- Long-term food security depends on sustainable natural resource and environmental management;
- Environmentally friendly, socially acceptable and affordable technologies should be developed and disseminated for effective use of natural resources; and
- Conditions and opportunities for communities and individual resource managers to sustainably manage their own natural resources and the environment should be created and facilitated.

1.5.3 Strategies for policy implementation

The Government of Uganda developed an Environmental Investment Programme that among other things outlined the strategies and factors that were to play central roles in the implementation of the environmental policy. The purpose of the programme was to ensure “a balance between socio-economic growth and sustainable use of natural and environmental resources “(MNR 1995:99). The programme identified capacity building in environmental management, enhancement of resource productivity; conservation and use of biodiversity resources; environmental education and public awareness as the central areas of investment to ensure sustainable development. The National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) was established in 1995 to oversee, co-ordinate, guide and support the implementation of the policy and its related activities. The policy was to be implemented by a cross-section of actors including:

- Government ministries,
- Local authorities,
- Research and academic institutions,
- The private sector and
- Non-Governmental Organisations.

It was this emphasis on education as a key strategy for policy implementation together with the NGOs as key actors that partly attracted my interest in this study, as stated at the beginning of this chapter. This emphasis in Uganda’s national environmental policy, on education as a key strategy for policy implementation, and on NGOs as implementing agencies, indicates the relevance and potential contribution of this research.

1.6 THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis has ten chapters. **Chapter one** introduces the study and its context, and the factors that motivated it.

Chapter two addresses the first objective of the study, namely: to review literature and develop a framework for the analysis of findings. The chapter clarifies key concepts and presents the conceptual framework and literature review. The relationship between the development process and the environmental crisis, and education as a response to the crisis are discussed. The chapter also analyses theoretical frameworks in education based on the ideas presented by Kemmis *et al* (1983), explaining the rationale for a socially critical orientation as the approach to the analysis.

Chapter three describes the research methods, techniques and process of data collection and analysis. Several aspects of the research methodology are also covered in other chapters of the thesis, since in PAR the process constitutes part of the findings.

Chapter four is based on the second objective of the study, which aimed at conducting a situation analysis of the context studied. The chapter maps out the contextual issues related to environment and natural resource management.

Chapter five is part of the context and describes VEDCO, the organisation that hosted the study, and the organisation's programme on which the study focused.

In chapter six, I present the process and findings of the first Participatory Action Research cycle that stretched from February to July 2000 and represented the first phase of the implementation of VEDCO's programme on sustainable agriculture and food security.

Chapter seven examines the role of organisational factors in the organisation's efforts to implement activities related to the national environmental policy at community level. The chapter represents a major reflection phase of the PAR process in which the organisational vision, mission, goals and activities were scrutinised in order to identify the challenges and develop appropriate responses to address them.

Chapter eight presents the second PAR cycle that stretched from October 2000 to June 2001, in which the plans emerging from the review in chapter seven were implemented and evaluated.

Chapter nine analyses the major findings of the study, comments on them and makes conclusions in relation to educational theory and policy implementation at community level.

Chapter ten is a reflection on the research process, the content and an assessment of what the study has been able to achieve.

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW
2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the first objective of the study, which was to derive an appropriate framework of key ideas, trends and conceptual tools through a review of the literature on education, and environmental and development education in particular. The chapter presents a review of literature on different theoretical frameworks used in education and other aspects relevant to this study. The chapter is divided into four major sections. The first section clarifies key concepts and terminology used in the study. Section two discusses the relationship between development and the environmental crisis; section three explores various theoretical frameworks in education, and section four justifies the choice of the socially critical approach to the study.

2.1 KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

This section clarifies the key concepts and terminology used in this study including: community, participation, education and training, community-based education, and community-based environmental education.

2.1.1 Community

Traditional definitions of community have tended to emphasise commonalities that cut across people, giving an impression of them as similar, unified or related (Edwards 1976). Hence common definitions have been based on aspects like geographical location, demographic characteristics, interest, culture, and profession/occupation as features characterising communities.

In this way, the tendency is to emphasise the sameness of people while ignoring the diversities. Different writers have decried this view of community as homogenous, which Chambers has associated with 'outsider professionals' and development workers (Chambers 1997). According to Chambers, there are many obvious differences within communities that remove any possibility for simplistic generalisations, a view shared by Mshana (1992), Watts (2000), Zerner (2000), and many others.

Watts (2000:37) argues that community is "an extraordinarily dense social object ... yet one that is rarely subject to critical scrutiny". He further elaborates that community "is often invoked as a unity, as an undifferentiated thing, with intrinsic powers, that speaks with a single voice, to the state, to trans-national NGOs, or the World Court". Nangendo (2001) argues that different

views on community notwithstanding, one has to put the African community into perspective. She contends that, although the traditional African community was characterised by intimate social interaction and strong communal ties of mutual concern, after colonialism and modernisation, that version of community no longer exists. Modern African communities are transitional with clear characteristics of the old and the new worlds. I largely agree with Nangendo's analysis of the African community, although I also contend that modernisation has only accelerated an already existing scenario of globalisation which has intensified levels of homogenisation and differentiation at the local and international scene.

This study is based on a view that accepts the commonalities between people as basic characteristics of a community, but also recognises the fact that behind the sameness there is much diversity. In the case of this study, community refers to people living within the same geographical location (village, parish, and sub-county) with farming as their main activity. The people also happen to have the same history, ethnic and cultural background. This does not mean that the people are homogenous; it is the farming, the location, history, ethnic and cultural backgrounds that are common to all, otherwise there are differences on the basis of gender, age, access to resources, education levels, religion, income and interests. Thus the use of the term "the community" is in no way intended as a generalisation, for the truth is that, within that community, there are several sub-communities.

2.1.2 Participation

Participation or community participation is a term that appears often in this study for two reasons: a) it is one of the recommended strategies for the implementation of the national environment policy, and b) VEDCO encourages participation as a method of work in the community. Participation, like community, could mean different things to different people depending on the development goals and perspectives. It is a concept that has become integral to development, political and educational discourses, particularly in developing countries. In all three fields, it has been associated with a democratisation process, restructuring of power relations and levelling of power gradients within society (Janse Van Rensburg & Lotz 2000). It is believed to consist of action that empowers people to affirm their ability to collectively organise themselves without authoritarian control.

The Webster's English Dictionary offers an easy and clear definition of participation as "the action or act of partaking, joining in or sharing with others". If we take participation simply as 'taking part', 'getting involved' or 'playing a role' in an activity, then there is no community where there is no participation. However, the question is, how does one play that role? What

are the aims behind that involvement? And, what are the power dynamics in the process? These are the factors that give shape to the nature of that participation and the potential benefits of its outcomes.

In this study, participation is examined from two perspectives that are closely related namely: a) in community development, and b) community-based education; both of which are integral to processes of social empowerment and change.

2.1.2.1 Participation from a community development perspective

The notion of participation has been used in community development contexts to describe different dimensions of community development: first, in terms of how it happens, second in terms of the goals and motivation behind it, and third in terms of the power dynamics involved. The way different people have tried to describe 'participation' brings out these different dimensions. Lele (1975) sees participation as sensitising rural people to increase their receptivity and ability to respond to development as well as to encourage local initiatives. This view of participation is associated with technicist⁵ approaches to development in which: a) rural people are considered ignorant, b) development as a process is conceived and inspired by people from outside the community, and c) participation is viewed as a means, instrument or tool to achieve given ends. The perspective resonates with a view advanced by Oakley and Marsden (1984), Pretty (1995a), and Rahnema (1992) among others, that participation is often perceived from two major angles: as a means to an end or as an end in itself. As a means to an end, the goal is to lead to reforms and improvements to meet previously established development objectives. As an end in itself, the goal is to empower people so that they can foster structural changes and do away with internal and external forces undermining individual and collective capacities and freedoms. Views on participation, like the one espoused by the World Bank (1994), which sees participation as a process in which all those concerned influence, share and control the development initiatives, decisions and resources which govern them, see participation as an end, which is ultimately, empowerment of all stakeholders.

Pretty (1995b) provides a typology of participation which characterises the process in seven different forms, ranging from very passive forms of participation where people are told what to do, or what has been done; asked for information or consulted; participate for incentives or

⁵ Schuurman E. (1997) describes technicism as a fundamental attitude that seeks to control reality and to solve all problems with the use of scientific-technological methods and tools. Technicist approaches therefore make exclusive efforts to explain and deal with development and other socio-economic issues using science, technology and the related scientific methods as if the causes of problems confronting society are always exclusively technical and only solvable through similar means.

provide physical support/labour to meet predetermined project goals. Participation can also be more interactive and involving people in a joint analysis of problems, leading to action plans and formation of new institutions. It can involve self-mobilisation where people act, independent of external influences, to change systems. Participation has often been used with the assumption that it will lead to change through people's actions. However, as Pretty observes, the term participation can be employed, knowing that it will not lead to action. Particularly if the more passive forms of participation are involved which, according to Rahnema (1992), can only lead to superficial and fragmented achievements with no lasting impact on people's lives.

In the community development context, the notion of participation emphasises the use of particular methods and techniques as a way of involving people in dealing with issues affecting them. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), also known as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), with roots both in Asia (India, Bangladesh and Pakistan) and Africa (Kenya) (Chambers 1997) is one such methodology. In essence, the process is as important as the content of participation for, as people participate, they live out the democratic processes and principles necessary for the transformation of their ways of acting, while at the same time they are solving the problems at hand (Shrivastava 1989).

Important to note, however, are the gaps between what participation is supposed to achieve, and what has often emerged. Mshana (1992), Oakley and Marsden (1984), Rahnema (1992) and others have observed that despite the enthusiasm for the concept among the development fraternity, there are several pitfalls. Such pitfalls include flaws in the process of empowerment; misunderstanding and manipulation of people at the grassroots level (Mshana, *ibid*); over-estimation of local capacities and underestimation of potential challenges (Watts, 2000) and trying to impose a new form of hegemony over people in the name of participation. Others include failure to bring about new forms of people's power by replacing the external experts with 'barefoot' experts in the name of change-agents who become 'ideologues' and, at times, 'self-appointed experts' on people's needs and strategies required to meet them (Rahnema 1992).

2.1.2.2 Participation from an adult education perspective

Participation as an educational practice is rooted in several historical, political and ideological currents and contexts. Dewey, an American liberal progressive education theorist, was the first modern education theorist to make a strong argument for the idea of participation and participatory education in the early 20th century. He looked at education as the heart of all social reform and saw the mental growth of individuals as dependent on their participation in

shared activities (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Trends in adult educational practice, particularly in the developing world, also involve a more critical dimension of participation. Prominent theoretical currents on participatory education from Latin America emphasise critical pedagogy and education for liberation, as articulated by Freire (Torres, 1995; see also section 2.3.5). Participatory action research is another current approach with roots traced to Canada in the area of industry, and to Tanzania in the field of adult education within rural communities (Kimberly-Ann 2002, Maguire 1987).

If one takes the Webster's English Dictionary definition of participation mentioned above, education is by its nature, a process that involves participation. O'Donoghue (1996) argues that there is no education without participation, for, as a social activity, it naturally involves participation in different ways. Nevertheless, the manner in which educators understand, view and encourage participation varies depending on the different educational ideologies at play within a particular context.

At one level, participation is uncritically viewed in terms of issues like learners' availability for the educational programmes, i.e. being able to attend (Jarvis (1985). In this view, analysis of participation revolves around who attends in terms of gender, age and religion. Participation viewed in this way ignores the issue of how learners participate and for what purpose, although they are essential for explaining the dynamics of educational programmes. This is a neoclassical view of participation and as shall be shown later, may do little to achieve the empowerment goal that is often emphasised as the ultimate of participatory educational processes.

At another level, participation in educational processes goes beyond the 'physical presence of the learners' to be taught, and aims to actively involve learners and educators alike, in the development of programmes and agendas by pooling life experiences; voicing needs and interests; learning from each other, and using methods that make direct use of participants' capacities, experiences and needs to interpret the world and chart a future (Elias and Merriam 1995). The third perspective of participation in education is closely related to the one discussed above, but goes a step further by engaging participants in identifying the problems in their lives, examining the socio-political, cultural, historical and any other underlying sources of powerlessness and developing collective action plans to change the situation (Freire 1970, Giroux 1983, Mayo 1999).

In the final analysis, the diversity in the views on participation in educational processes firstly awakens us to the broad nature of participation and as such dismisses the possibility of generalising participation. This is because different individuals, groups and agencies may interpret and apply the idea of participation according to their particular development perspectives and goals. Secondly, in neither the educational nor in the community development fields can one claim to have interpretations or models of participation applicable to all programmes in all communities. It is also an important eye-opener and a warning to educators, development workers and researchers in community contexts who intend to analyse participatory processes and work with programmes that profess to be participatory, to approach the issues of participation with sober minds and act in a responsive pragmatic manner.

The above discussion is not meant to create an impression of a dichotomy between community development and community-based education. The two are organically related for, in rural developing contexts like the one explored in this study, education and training outside the formal structure are rarely for their own sake, as illustrated in the clarification of community-based education (see section 2.1.3) and the view by Hope *et al* (1984:3):

Development and education are first of all about liberating people from all that holds them back from full human life. Ultimately development and education are about transforming society. ... Because bonds of poverty and oppression make the lives of the vast numbers of people increasingly inhuman, it is amongst the poor and oppressed that development programmes and adult education must start.

2.1.3 Education and training

The way these two terms are used in this study demands clarification in order to avoid any misunderstanding. Rogers (1992:20-1), writing from an adult education perspective, refers to education “as all forms of planned learning by which one person directly or indirectly, helps another person(s) to learn something”. About training he says, “I see training as a part (but only a small part) of education”. He goes further to say that the distinction is not always clear, but he uses the phrase “education and training” as a catchall phrase to mean “all forms of planned learning”. I find Rogers' description of the two terms applicable in the case of this study. Firstly, the fact that training is part of education does not make training any less educational. Secondly, the broad and accommodative nature of the description allows activities like training in sustainable agriculture, food security, farm management and agricultural extension central to this study, to be seen as educational without fear of being accused of abusing the concept of education that has often been more associated with formal learning

2.1.4 Community-based education

Community-based education is a term referring to adult learning processes pertinent to socio-economic development contexts. This study adopts a view of community-based education advanced by Galbraith (1995), which covers different educational issues of particular interest to this study. Galbraith views community-based education as a process concerned with helping people to become more competent in their skills, attitudes and concepts in order to live and gain more control over different aspects of life, through democratic participation in their particular contexts (Galbraith 1995). This view is based on the assumption that people have the potential to solve many of their problems through their own action relying on local resources. Learners' active participation, the centrality of learners' needs, a focus on people-centred transformation and the use of methods that take into consideration learners' different contexts, form the foundation of this type of Education (Tight 1996). Thus community-based education shares principles and intentions with socially critical education and critical education for environment and sustainability, which are central concerns of this study.

2.1.5 Community-based environmental education

In the context of this study, community-based environmental education refers to educational and training activities organised to respond to development needs that have a direct relationship with the environment. These activities include among others, extension to support sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, food security and agroforestry. The term 'community-based environmental education' is used for a couple of reasons:

- a) the processes the term refers to are 'community-based' because they match the description of community-based education (see section. 2.1.4) in purpose and methodology, location and context;
- b) It is a form of education, because its primary goal is to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills among people so that they can address issues, challenges and obstacles they face in life.

All these aspects are central to education. Community-based environmental education has been mentioned (Veramu 1998) as an essential dimension of the achievement of sustainable development. Fagan (1996:138) describes community-based environmental education as "action-based education, confronting people with the reality of their locality, an assessment of what is truly happening in their home environment, and helps them to demand change and take action". He also argues that, "education has to spring from local people, their values,

aspirations and beliefs. It has to be real and active and it has to promote ownership and empowerment". This implies localised education content with direct relevance to people's lives and the challenges they face. Community-based education is by its nature not education for education's sake, but education that addresses issues inseparable from people's struggles to achieve meaningful livelihoods. Such struggles are, however, directly related to the escalation of the prevailing environmental crisis in many places of the world.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

2.2.1 The development process and elements of the crisis

The development process has direct bearing on the current environmental crisis in the world (WCED 1988) (also see the Ugandan environmental crisis in section 1.3.1). The purpose here is not to define development and the environmental crisis for both concepts have been extensively defined and discussed by individual scholars, organisations and institutions including the World Bank (1994) and United Nations (UNCED 1992). The intention is rather a brief illustration of how some interpretations of development, in particular the view of development as modernisation and growth (Escobar 1997, Esteva 1992), have aggravated the environmental crisis. For most of the twentieth century, development continued to be perceived as economic growth and modernisation as the right strategy for pursuing it. This pursuit of modernisation as a goal for socio-economic transformation has compounded the environmental crisis in different ways. Modernisation often glorifies the role of science and technology and capital investment to meet people's needs, but is insensitive to the environmental repercussions of the related processes.

In poverty-stricken contexts, the problems of poverty and deprivation are viewed as technical, to be fixed relatively easily using science, technology and finance capital, through increased investment (Escobar 1997). This technicist view of development turns people and their cultures into one part of the problem. The solutions to these problems are based on the modernisation of peoples' ways of life and attitudes to more euro-centric ones, which are seen as yardsticks for measuring development. This means reliance on science and technology to boost the production of goods to meet the demands of modernisation and a capitalist economy. Unfortunately, this reliance on capital, science and technology perpetuates unequal political, economic and social relations, with the rich getting richer and the poor, poorer (George 1997). In this context, the environment is not a neutral natural phenomenon, but a socially constructed

one (Vidart 1978). Eckersley (1992) argues that poverty and ecological degradation are results of the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands.

In the field of agriculture, which is integral to this study, the growth and modernisation development paradigm has manifested itself in the drive towards modernisation as a method to deal with the problems of poverty and food insecurity in developing countries. Agricultural modernisation emphasises the intensification of external inputs like chemical fertilisers, agrochemicals and improved seeds. The approach was first used in Asia in the 1960s with contradictory results (Conway & Barbier 1990, Pretty 1995b). Its promoters praised it for increased food production, which enabled per capita food production to keep pace with population growth in the past fifty years (Pretty 1995b). Many critics see it as one of the fiascos of the twentieth century in the field of agriculture (McDougall 1990). Criticisms include environmental degradation through the contamination of water, food, fodder and the atmosphere (Conway & Pretty 1991). There has been misuse of water, leading to the depletion of ground water, water logging and salinity in some places (Pretty 1995). Increased use of chemicals to control pests has led to an increase in chemically resistant pests, diseases and weeds (Conway & Barbier 1991). The modernisation approach to agriculture has led to the widespread loss of traditional farming approaches like mixed farming, which are environmentally friendly, and also a new dependency on external inputs produced and controlled by corporate enterprises (McDougall 1990, Moris 1990). While the benefits of the agricultural modernisation approach have often been short term, these repercussions are long term.

It is important to acknowledge that while the growth and modernisation development paradigm has played a key role in perpetuating the environmental crisis, lack of development in poor parts of the world has also perpetuated the crisis. This makes the relationship between development and the environment complex and often paradoxical. Environmental harm is not only due to the wrong kinds of development such as modernisation, but also to a lack of development or the absence of better forms of development, as is evident in capital-restricted countries like Uganda (see sections 1.4.3 and 1.4.4). This is evident in destructive practices like overstocking, overgrazing, the traditional slash and burn method of farming, and the draining of wetlands (MNR 1995). Material conditions on the ground including the nature of the economy, related politics and culture thus shape the environmental crisis. As such, the demand for an approach to development that is sustainable does not imply a universal approach, but rather one in line with the particular context of the people.

2.2.2 Environmental Education as a response to the Environmental crisis

Environmental education has emerged as one of the key responses to the environmental crisis, along with policy development, legislation, management systems and standards, among others (UNCED 1992). The main focus in this study is on environmental education as a strategy for implementing the environmental policy at community level. Whilst the crisis has dictated the emergence of environmental education as one of the major responses, the character and dimension of environmental education processes have been shaped by techno-centrist and eco-centrist environmental philosophies/ideologies, (Pepper 1986, Eckersley 1992). Eckersley (1992:26) summarises the main distinguishing feature of techno-centrism as the interpretation of the 'nonhuman world' as a 'storehouse of resources' whose value is measured in relation to its capacity to serve as an instrument or a means to human ends. Techno-centrism has two central tenets: a) the belief in human capacity and science and technology to overcome human misery and other limitations and b) management of the environment by paternalistic regulatory command and control measures in the form of environmental legislation and managerial practices to guide resource utilisation (Fien 1993).

Eco-centrism, on the other hand, broadly disagrees with the techno-centric, blind faith in science and technology, externalisation of environmental problems and solutions, and the related paternalistic managerial practices. What is emphasised in eco-centrism is power and economic decentralisation and informal social and economic transactions (Fien 1993). Eco-centrists seek to remake society in such a way that its modes and relations of production are based on harmonious relations, not only between society and nature, but also between individuals within society (Ryle 1988, Fien 1993).

Such diverse ideological interpretations of the environmental crisis and how to manage it are also reflected in the nature of emerging environmental education orientations. The techno-centrist ideology tends to be associated with technicist environmental management procedures and programmes, including education programmes. Eco-centric environmental thinking tends to favour managerial activities that aim to empower people to manage the environment. The character of responses to the environmental crisis, including environmental education, largely depends on the ideologies at play in a particular time and space. The next section discusses the different orientations to education in general and environmental education in particular and tries to illustrate the effect of ideological factors in shaping environmental education.

2.3 THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS IN EDUCATION

2.3.1 Introduction and rationale

Educators writing from a critical perspective have developed a system of distinguishing between three broad orientations in education. While this classification has its limitations, it also has considerable value, particularly in helping to characterise and explain different educational processes and their related outcomes. For this reason, it is used in this study to classify educational processes and guide discussions on educational practice. The study draws mainly on the framework developed by Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983) and adapted by Fien (1993) and Janse van Rensburg (1995) to the field of environmental education. This framework draws on the work of Habermas (1972), a critical theorist who described three knowledge-constitutive interests as central components of the theory of knowledge.

2.3.2 Introduction to theoretical orientations in education

2.3.2.1 Knowledge-constitutive interests

This section of the chapter explores the theoretical orientations⁶ underlying educational practice, in order to justify the choice of orientation for this study and to contribute to the conceptual framework for analysis. Habermas' epistemological contention, summarised in what he calls "knowledge-constitutive interests", informs the discussion of education orientations. According to Habermas (1972), there are three fundamental human interests; namely the technical, the practical and the critical, or emancipatory, knowledge-constitutive interests. It is these interests that influence the different types of knowledge and educational processes. Grundy (1987:12) describes the technical interest as "a fundamental interest in controlling the environment through rule-following action, based upon empirically grounded laws". Because the technical interest aims at controlling and mastering the physical world, it is responsible for instrumental knowledge and educational processes that aim to satisfy physical and economic needs, and to shape learners in line with the world in its current form. The technical interest gives rise to instrumental action governed by technical rules based on empiricist knowledge.

⁶ In this study I have decided to use the term educational orientation, which I have borrowed from Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983), adapted by Fien (1993) to refer to the different outlooks on education instead of paradigm. I find it less shrouded in debate and argument and secondly to avoid the rigid compartmentalization often associated with the paradigm debates. There are no clear shifts from one orientation to another, as is the case in original use of the term paradigm.

Grundy (ibid: 14) describes the practical knowledge-constitutive interest as “a fundamental interest in understanding the environment through interaction based upon a consensual interpretation of meaning”. She argues that the practical interest aims at understanding the environment, not to formulate rules for controlling and manipulating it, but “so that one is able to interact with it” (Grundy ibid: 13). This interest leads to educational processes and outcomes that create opportunities for learners to play active roles as stakeholders in learning programmes in which they consciously and willingly choose to take part (Grundy, ibid).

The critical emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interest is defined as “a fundamental interest in emancipation and empowerment to engage in autonomous action arising out of authentic, critical insights into the social construction of the human society” (Grundy, ibid: 19). This knowledge interest gives rise to educational processes that seek to enable the disadvantaged to transform their situation for the better.

Each one of these three knowledge-constitutive interests underlies one of the major educational frameworks or orientations outlined by Kemmis, *et al* (1983) namely: neo-classical, liberal/progressive and socially critical educational orientations. The next few pages are dedicated to a close examination of the main features of these orientations as a basis for analysing the community-based learning processes constituting the central focus of this study.

2.3.3 The neo-classical/vocational orientation to education

2.3.3.1 Historical roots

The roots of neoclassical education can be traced to three main philosophical traditions: materialism, scientific realism and empiricism, and positivism (Elias & Merriam 1995). Materialism is described as a theory that contends that “reality can be explained by the laws of matter and motion without any appeal to mind or spiritual reality” (ibid: 80). There is more than one form of materialist thought, but the basic assumptions about reality are the same. The neoclassical idea of education and science as instruments is derived from this tradition, as expressed by Bacon, that “science is a tool for creating new knowledge that can be used to advance human well-being and progress” (Ozmon & Craver 1986:260). This view is fundamental to all modern technocratic practices, be it in education, development (see section 2.2.2) or management. The belief in empirical science that underlies the epistemological assumption of the infallibility of the human senses and knowledge that is generated through the senses is another root of this orientation to education. It implies that ‘true knowledge’ is that which is generated “through an examination of information gained through the senses alone”

(Elias & Merriam 1995:80). This epistemological assumption is closely related to the positivist epistemological contention that the truth can only be arrived at through scientific observation and measurement (ibid. Also see Aspin & Chapman 1998).

2.3.3.2 Overview of the orientation

The neo-classical orientation to education is informed by the technical knowledge-constitutive interest described by Habermas (1972). Sarup (1978) and Ashley (1989), commentators from the critical Marxist and liberal positions respectively, saw the purpose of neoclassical education as to preserve the existing social, cultural, political, ideological and economic order. The theoretical underpinning of this orientation is that knowledge worth its name is that which helps to solve technical problems. Under this assumption, education becomes a technical process and an instrument at the disposal of the educator to manipulate in order to achieve predetermined behavioural goals and objectives (Elias & Merriam 1980, Higgs 1998). This places the educator in a superior position, as a possessor of the 'right' knowledge and skills to provide answers and solutions to problems, while the learner is viewed as an empty receptacle to be filled by the educator (Freire 1970). The ensuing power relations foster a sense of inadequacy and dependency in the learner that become a basis for accepting the status quo (Giroux 1983). Adherents of the neo-classical orientation do not seem to recognise the need to address the different forms of inequality on the basis of class, gender, religion and other forms of social stratification upon which society is founded and which have the potential to undermine the ability of educational programmes to equitably respond to people's problems.

Carr (1990) argued that neoclassical educators approach educational practice as a 'neutral' instrument for pursuing given social objectives, and educational theory as a neutral instrument for overcoming technical problems. The educator's role is to design a learning environment that elicits desired behaviour towards meeting these goals and to 'extinguish' behaviour that is not desirable (Elias & Merriam 1980). Because of the assumption that the learner is entirely ignorant of what it is intended to be learnt and needing to be equipped with the 'right knowledge and skills', neo-classical practitioners adopt transmittal methods of teaching. Freire (1970:45) describes that approach to education as "an act of depositing in which the learners become depositories and the teacher a depositor". The approach has thus come to be known as the "banking method" of teaching in adult education contexts. According to Freire (1970), learners are in this process disempowered, while the educators develop a false sense of empowerment. This approach has been equally criticised in the formal schooling context where education has been used as a tool for cultural induction (Giroux 1983).

2.3.3.3 Neo-classical environmental and community education

In the field of environmental education, the neo-classical orientation is associated with 'Education about the Environment' as articulated by Fien (1993). The assumption underlying 'education about the environment' is that environmental problems can be solved by exposing learners to information about them. The argument is that people do not behave positively towards the environment because they don't understand it and the problems facing it.

This view of environmental education is also associated with the techno-centric environmental ideology (Eckersley 1992, Fien 1993, Pepper 1984). Human capacity to overcome human misery and other limitations, together with science and technology, are seen as central pillars of techno-centric environmentalism. The techno-centric environmental ideology advocates technocratic solutions that include regulatory command and control measures, and the use of expert knowledge to advise and guide on the right course of action. In essence, the environment and environmental issues are removed from the realm of the ordinary people and placed in the hands of the experts who are believed to understand the situation best and to possess the necessary technical knowledge and skills to fix it.

The assumption has been associated with transmittal Environmental Education methods and approaches, that aim to 'fill-up' supposedly 'empty learners', with information, experiences and facts. The purpose is to raise learners' awareness, which it is assumed will lead to the development of new values and behaviours. Viewing learners as passive recipients of knowledge from educators perpetuates hierarchical gradients in which educators, purportedly knowledgeable, find themselves doing all the planning and thinking for the participants (see sections 6.3.1, and 9.4.1.1 a, b & c).

Education 'about the environment' and the associated pedagogical processes have been criticised for being teacher-centred and expert-driven, using top-down methods such as 'show and tell' and targeted messages, all of which make the learner only 'visible', but 'inaudible' (Lotz & Ward 2000, Taylor 1997). In essence, the 'technical knowledge interest', founded on a belief in solving technical problems, turns the environment into "a heap of problems" and "a world of problems and nature at risk" (O'Donoghue & Janse van Rensburg 1996). Environmental education becomes a technical enterprise for redeeming the environment. A linear relationship between knowledge, awareness and behavioural change is also assumed, although many of us know through experience that behavioural change does not necessarily

depend on increased knowledge and awareness alone; pedagogical processes, learners' existing knowledge and contextual factors also play an important role (Taylor, 1997). Methods like show and tell can raise awareness, but do not necessarily help learners to develop the motivation and capacity to act, both of which are attitudinal and skills-development related matters, which require different methods and approaches. The approach has also featured strongly, and for a long time, in the field of agricultural extension where the diffusion model of change is used, the emphasis being on the transfer of knowledge by a 'change agent' to a 'target client' (Hillbur 1998:32). The model assumes that information is disseminated at one source and spreads to the different farmers. The agricultural researchers develop the innovation; pass it to the extension workers who disseminate to the farmers. The assumption is that the agent or extension worker has the right kind of knowledge, skills or information and capacity to get through to farmers and in the process change them. This echoes the neoclassical assumption about learners as empty receptacles to be filled by the trainer/teacher, who is believed to know all.

The 'transfer of technology' extension approach (Hillbur, *ibid*, Pretty 1995) reflects a technocratic approach to development and the related belief in the inherent capacity of science and technology to solve problems. According to Hillbur, where the technology fails using this approach, the blame is laid on the people as 'anti' change due to lack of knowledge or resources or inappropriate attitudes. The appropriate response in this case is to 'fill-up' the knowledge gap, sensitise or provide capital inputs to cover the resource gap. By its very nature, transfer of technology is a technocratic uni-directional approach, which perpetuates the use of top-down training methods and techniques, like 'train and visit' (T&V) and demonstrations.

2.3.4 The Liberal/progressive educational orientation

2.3.4.1 Historical Roots

The roots of a liberal/progressive orientation to education cannot be traced to one single origin. Several philosophical and intellectual currents were responsible for the emergence and subsequent development of the orientation. Analysis of the writing of Elias and Merriam (1980,1995) reveals a combination of influences including the Socratic, Platonian and Aristotelian roots of liberal education, and more recent progressive, humanistic and existentialist ideas. On the one hand, the liberal rejection of utilitarian education, and emphasis on education for life rather than work, can be traced to the Socratic rejection of the sophist

utilitarian approach to education (Elias & Merriam 1995). On the other hand, emphasis on learners' experience as a basis for learning can be traced to the view of, among others, Bishop John Comenius who suggested that children be allowed, "to imitate nature for their education, rather than reading books" (ibid: 46). Rousseau, who proposed that all learning of children up to the age of twelve should come from experience, developed this idea further. Other philosophers like Pestalozzi, Froebel, Bacon, Locke and Dewey stressed the same views (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Dewey (1916) went further and included aspects like education for democracy, which he defined as people engaged in joint activity to solve their common problems. The autonomy of the learner and belief in the person's innate potential and goodness can be traced to the humanist and existentialist philosophical currents of the 19th and twentieth centuries.

2.3.4.2 Overview of the orientation

The liberal/progressive orientation to education is informed by the practical knowledge-constitutive interest described by Habermas (1972). The purpose of the liberal progressive education is to prepare learners for life rather than work (Fien 1993). Through contributing their experiences as a basis for learning, the learners become central to the learning process (Elias & Merriam 1980). The orientation is thus responsive to learners' material conditions of existence. This is important in addressing the issue of relevant learning, which is an essential component of community-based educational programmes. The importance of the individual as the centre of social life distinguishes the liberal progressive education orientation from others. According to liberal progressive philosophers, human beings are born with great potential for good, but as a result of unjust social restrictions evil creeps into the individual's character (Ashley 1989, Bertrand 1995). Fien (1993) argues that the liberal orientation adopts a reformist approach to address social problems on the assumption that the means for social change exist in the structures of democratic societies. Ashley (1989) agrees with this view and argues that reform is the most compatible form of change for liberal societies.

The learner is viewed as an active constructor of knowledge through experience and opportunities to discover and enquire. The educator is in contrast viewed as a facilitator of the learning process who takes the role of an organiser of learning opportunities, enabling the learner to take advantage of those opportunities and achieve autonomy (Bertrand 1995, McKay & Romm 1992).

2.3.4.3 Liberal environmental and community education

In the literature on environmental education, a liberal orientation to education has been associated with what Fien (1993) calls education 'in or through the environment'. Education in the environment emphasises the centrality of the individual learners and their experiences (in this case in and of the environment) as the basis for learning. The purpose of 'education in the environment' is to use learner-centred methods to present environmental issues in such a way that the learner can make meaning from the environment. Discovery through exploration with the aim of gaining understanding is a distinguishing factor of methodology in 'education in the environment'. In terms of educational methods and techniques, education in the environment differs from the transmission teaching approaches common in neo-classical education about the environment. Emphasis is on the use of experiential learning approaches in which the learner becomes wholly immersed in the learning process. Education 'in the environment' uses the environment as the media for education. Methods like *solitaire*, fieldwork, group work and PRA/PLA are used to teach.

Features of liberal/progressive education can be traced in many current educational programmes based in communities. Various community-based training programmes, including adult education and literacy programmes, community-based natural resource management and community conservation programmes are based on liberal/progressive education principles. Adult education and literacy programmes in Uganda provide examples of this orientation within community contexts. REFLECT for example is an interesting case. Although the basic assumptions of REFLECT can be associated with the Freirian liberatory approach (whose roots are largely socially critical), its operations are fundamentally liberal progressive. REFLECT, like the founders of liberal progressive education, rejects textbooks, primers and any pre-printed material other than the facilitators' guide. Instead, the approach emphasises the use of learners' experiences and draws on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques to achieve this (IBRD: 2001). Within the same context, the government-run Functional Adult Literacy programme, which is run more centrally, uses primers and other printed materials and could easily be mistaken for a technocratic programme, is deeply rooted in the liberal/progressive orientation, particularly in its intention and commitment to "keep learning and life together by tying the learning to what the learners were already doing..."(MoGCD: 1996).

In the area of natural resource management, the notions of community-based natural resource management and community conservation and the related training and managerial practices, manifest a strong liberal/progressive inclination. People-centeredness in terms of programme content, the use of participatory methods and the shift from institutionalised to community-based resource management, are central features of the liberal/progressive orientation. The origins of the liberal/progressive orientation and the socially critical orientation are closely related.

The underlying assumptions of the liberal/progressive orientation and the related education programmes have come under criticism from different critics. Education 'in the environment' has for example been criticised by Fien (1993) for arousing learners' anxiety about environmental issues but failing to empower them to respond to the issues appropriately. Critics believe that the liberal approach does not go far enough to raise the necessary capacity for people to address environmental issues. Huckle (1986) criticises 'education in the environment' for stressing personal values while making little mention of politics and other related dynamics. This is detrimental to change as a goal of environmental education, for change in relation to resource management and utilisation is necessarily a political process characterised by contradictions and conflicts related to power and control over resources. The liberal view of change through reform is also questionable; it implies that those in power will determine the pace and direction of change, yet change might mean compromising their privileged positions. This implies that the assumed reform can only go as far as those with power can allow it, for the dominant sections of society will never voluntarily relinquish their rights and privileges. In the case researched here, donor-government-NGO alliances within a globalising capitalist framework may constitute such "dominant sections of society". The assumption that the means of social change are present in the structures of the 'democratic societies and in the next generation of citizens' (Fien 1993, Ashley 1989) can hardly apply in the aspiring, faltering or struggling democracies of the third world. Such structures in third world countries are either too young, under gestation or totally non-existent. My opinion is that education should take deliberate steps to address social problems in a more radical way.

There are several challenges associated with liberal progressive community-based educational activities. Firstly, whilst participatory methods and approaches are emphasised, cases of using them manipulatively to meet predetermined goals have been cited (Janse van Rensburg and Lotz 2000); secondly, challenges in defining the boundaries of communities have also emerged

thirdly, communities are diverse and so are their needs, interests and aspirations. This is a challenge when it comes to harmonising the needs of the different interest groups, and individuals and might lead to manipulations and tensions between the individual, group and community interests. All these are important factors that can affect the character of programmes if not understood and carefully managed.

2.3.5 Socially critical orientation

2.3.5.1 Historical roots

The roots of critical theory can be traced to the Frankfurt school, a group of socio-political analysts associated with the Institute of Social Research founded in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt (Gibson 1986, Tripp 1992). Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and later Habermas, have been cited as the most prominent members of this school and responsible for the genesis of critical theory. They were preoccupied with the idea of creating a more just society with people having not only equal access to “good things of life”, but also “people being in cultural, economic and political control of their lives” (Tripp 1992:13-23). This was a concern sparked by, among other concerns, Fascism in Europe, the newly emerging forms of capitalism, along with the changing forms of domination that accompanied such changes (Giroux 1983).

Marxism, the German philosophical and social thought represented by Kant, Hegel and Max Weber, and Freud’s assumptions about human consciousness and common sense, have been stated as the intellectual currents that informed critical theory (Gibson 1986, Giroux 1983 and Burbules & Ruppert 1999). This might partly explain why critical writers themselves have confessed the inappropriateness of talking about critical theory as though it were one clearly defined theory. Gibson (1986) and Giroux (1983) argued that the history of critical theory has been a history of disagreements and disparities in approaches and concerns, from the members of the Frankfurt school to present day. According to Giroux (1983:7), critical theory “was never a fully articulated philosophy shared un-problematically by all members of the Frankfurt school”.

Although critical theory evolved in a socio-political, economic and cultural environment, it also found its way into education. Freire applied the principles of critical theory among minorities in Latin America and developed a theory called critical pedagogy, which has been interpreted as “teaching-learning from within the principles of critical theory” (Tripp, 1992). Action researchers,

notably from Australia, in particular Kemmis, Carr, Grundy and others, also played a significant role in integrating critical theory into education and educational research. They have been associated with the introduction of the term 'socially critical' to reflect the social nature of their critical engagement as opposed to other forms of being critical (Tripp *ibid*).

2.3.5.2 Overview of the orientation

The socially critical orientation to education is informed by the emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interest that seeks to create opportunities for people to set themselves free from ideological, socio-political and cultural forces undermining people's individual and collective freedoms (Fien 1993). Socially critical education is founded on the belief in the need for education to play a role, along with other social institutions and agencies, in creating just and democratic⁷ societies. The orientation emphasises the ideological nature of education (Carr & Kemmis 1986, Freire 1972, Giroux 1983, Mayo 1999) in which education is seen as a process to engage society and social structures immediately, not merely to prepare learners for later participation. The ultimate goal of critical education is to empower learners to take control of their emancipation from all socio-political, economic and cultural limitations (Giroux 1983). According to critical pedagogy, emancipation arises from within, when those concerned become aware of the need for liberation as their responsibility, and act. This makes critical pedagogy an appropriate transformative methodology in under-privileged contexts like the rural setting of this study.

In the socially critical orientation, knowledge is seen as socially located and part of a wider socio-economic, political and cultural framework; for human understanding of the world is seen as an interpretation of reality as observed from a particular viewpoint. Knowledge is also seen as a catalyst for the social action necessary for positive change in society (Giroux 1983, Mayo 1999, Bertrand 1995) and learners and educators as co-constructors of knowledge in a situation of mutual respect in order to respond to collective needs. The learner is expected to be a critical and constructive co-participant; self-actualisation is understood in a social context and the true and the good is pursued in transforming and being transformed by society (Fien 1993).

⁷ Bertrand (1995:164) comments on democracy in a manner that I find appropriate in the context of a critical framework (or orientation). He argues "Democracy should be understood in this context as a genuine exercise of power by the majority and not merely as an application of seemingly democratic rules."

Methods in socially critical education aim to empower and emancipate learners through active participation in the learning process. Freire (1970:53) recommended use of the “problem-posing” approach to break the “vertical patterns characteristic of banking education”. Dialogue between the learners and the educators is a key factor in the process of learning in which the educator ‘provides a framework for thinking’ and raises critical questions to the learners who actively participate in describing and analysing situations, making suggestions, taking decisions and planning responses (Hope *et al* 1984).

At least three approaches associated with socially critical orientation can be cited here: Training for transformation (Hope *et al* 1984), Participatory Learning and Action (Chambers 1997, Mukherjee 1994) and Participatory Action Research (Carr & Kemmis 1986). All the three draw heavily from Freire’s philosophy of liberation and empowerment through critical awareness building. They are also known as ‘active learning methods’ (O’Donoghue 1996) for being practical, interactive, and dealing with issues of relevance to participants. Participatory methods and techniques often involve collective investigation into concrete situations on the ground in order to gain a clear picture of the different dimensions of environmental and developmental problems (Apel & Camozzi 1996, Fagan 1996).

In spite of the apparent appropriateness and potential of participatory methodologies and approaches, several scholars have identified a number of limitations, as noted in (section 2.1.2). Astrid (1998) has raised key questions on the nature of learning emerging from PRA/PLA. The author sees the PRA approach as a replacement of the traditional top-down monologue by a new form of bottom-up monologue through the insistence on the non-interventionist, neutral stance of PRA facilitators. She wonders what sharing goes on in PRA when facilitators are only expected to listen to the local people and accept their information/knowledge in a non-judgemental way (also see Mukherjee 1993 on principles and foundations of PRA). In Astrid’s view, the role of the facilitator as an educator and the definition of what constitutes learning, have not been fully explored. She associates this failure with the origins of PRA in research rather than in education.

2.3.5.3 Socially critical environmental and community education

Education ‘for the environment’ as described by Fien (1993:43) is an integration of “a socially critical orientation in education and eco-socialist environmental ideology” aiming at the

development of moral and political awareness, knowledge, commitment and skills to analyse issues and participate in an informed and democratic way in environmental decision-making and problem-solving.

Although views on 'education for the environment' have been developed in formal education contexts, they seem relevant to education within a community context for two reasons:

- a) it is based on the eco-socialist ideology where environmental problems are viewed as socially constructed
- b) Eco-socialists emphasise that environmental issues and problems should be studied on a local scale, focussing on socio-economic, ideological and political values (Johnston 1989).

Closely related to 'education for the environment', is 'education for sustainability', as described by Huckle (1991) and Huckle and Sterling (1996). It should, however, be noted that the two are descriptive labels for broad orientations and methodologies with more or less distinctive features and identifiable underpinnings, that almost always need to be seen in relation to other orientations and methodologies, in order to recognise them. The implication is that even as they are discussed, one should not be misled to view them as concrete entities in themselves. Education for sustainability (Huckle 1991) involves a critique of modernism and the unequal power relations reflected in the socio-economic and political arenas of society. The character of the environmental crisis is viewed as based on specific factors with a given context, in other words it is contextually defined. Education for sustainability emphasises inter and trans-disciplinary enquiry, process oriented-ness and empowerment and recognises the ideological nature of education (Sterling 1996).

The assumptions behind education for the environment and education for sustainability have, however, been criticised on several grounds. Gough (1987), from a post-structural perspective, criticised 'education for environment' as sloganeering and unacceptably narrowing the range of learning outcomes for learners. He sees the notion of 'education for the environment' as patronising and anthropocentric in its implied capacity to know what is "good for" "the environment". Jickling (1999), a liberal/progressive critic, also challenged education for environment for advocating a prescriptive particular endpoint to environmental education processes. The implication of these criticisms is that the assumptions of education for environment and education for sustainability curtail learner freedom and impose particular

views of education just like the neo-classical technicist approaches and practices socially critical education purports to challenge.

Hart (1993), Spork (1992) and Stevenson (1987), cited in Lotz (1996), argued that contradictions between the social and cultural purposes of schooling, the ideological orientations of teachers and pedagogical processes of critical pedagogy have led to the failure of the goals of socially critical environmental education in formal contexts. Whilst these critiques relate to socially critical environmental education within a school context, they alert us to the importance of methodology and orientation to the educational processes in realising certain goals; i.e. the consistency between goals, methodological orientation and context.

I have also observed contradictions inherent in some assumptions underpinning the socially critical orientation, with particular regard to learners. There is a sweeping assumption that participants are not only inherently able, but also willing and ready to take immediate responsibility for their liberation. With this attitude it is also possible for one to naively believe in the educators' unlimited capacity to competently lead learners in the process of empowerment and emancipation without 'engineering and manipulating' them. It has been said that some purportedly emancipatory programmes are either unwilling or unable to spend a sufficient amount of time to ensure that the process of empowerment has taken root to sustain the achievements (Mshana 1992). Mezirow (1990) raised an important point in that, while many emancipatory education efforts encourage transformative learning, little attention is given to the creation of sustainable structures to enable learners to freely exercise what they have achieved through the process. "The problem still remains that, even in a Freirian model of education, people can change their theories without having improved their capacity to change their situation" (Mezirow 1990:85).

The list of criticisms is long and in many areas valid, but the key gap I find in these criticisms with particular regard to this study is that most of them have focused on formal environmental education. The question is to what extent do the same criticisms hold within a community-based context? How do the ideological orientations of facilitators, for example, influence the learning processes? Can the fact that environmental education within a community context is meant for adult learners with greater freedom in co-constructing goals and negotiating methods make a difference?

2.4 RATIONALE FOR A SOCIALLY CRITICAL ORIENTATION

In this study I have decided to view education as an integral part of the process of development and social change; a view emphasised by Janse van Rensburg (1995). As I take this perspective, I also recognise, and agree with other socially critical writers, that education is not a neutral process (Freire 1970, Giroux 1983, Mezirow 1990, Sarup 1978, Youngman 1986). According to Youngman, education is not only inextricably linked to the economic, social and political structure of society, but it is also an arena for class struggles, a site of resistance and opposition to unjust socio-political and economic structures. That is why emancipatory education espoused by the critical orientation (section 2.3.5) triggers hope for the marginalized. It also spells out more plausible and workable solutions to long-term problems, as the people themselves are the main resource for change.

My personal and professional background also played a central role in my decision to choose a socially critical orientation as the main lens for analysis in this study. As a former student of Political Economy, Development Studies and Adult Education at the University of Dar es Salaam, where these subjects were taught from a critical perspective, I am often drawn towards the critical side of scholarship. At masters level I conducted a socially critical study on the changing social and economic relations in Uganda's fishing economy. These make up the academic and professional history that has shaped my academic orientation. As a result, my view of education in general, and environment and development education in particular, is that of transformative processes, a view located within the critical education orientation. There were also a number of contextual factors in the case study that supported this choice. These included the government policy framework and orientation of the national environmental education strategy for community-based Environmental Education programmes. The strategy and policy prescribe a combination of a socially critical and social constructivist agenda for community-based environmental education programmes in the country (NEMA, 1998b:36-7). Key terms used in the policy description of the desired educational practices include: people-centeredness, needs-oriented, full participation, programme ownership, empowerment, decision taking and cognition of strategic and practical gender needs and action, all of which invoke a socially critical agenda.

In summary, I have chosen the socially critical educational orientation as the main analytical lens for the study because of its empowering and emancipatory features, which I find crucial for

achieving the anticipated goals of Uganda's environmental policy (MNR 1995). A key motivation is the fact that learners are viewed as responsible people who can actively engage in the learning process, participate in the construction of meaning from situations and crises they experience and take informed action on them (Giroux, 1983). Furthermore, the approach provides a satisfactory framework for exploring the complex social, political and economic forces at the micro and macro levels that might influence the relationship between people and the environment. This is by means of focussing on the interaction between factors such as ownership of and access to resources, distribution and redistribution of resources, social organisation and power relations in the production and social reproduction processes (Leftwich, 1983). Educational and organisational processes, which recognise the centrality of learners in the process of learning, are emphasised in the critical tradition. The fact that the emancipatory goal is to empower not only the learners, but also the educators through a collegial interactive process adds to both the value and relevance of the socially critical orientation within a context like the one in this study. At community level, this can work as a major catalyst for continued enthusiasm to participate in educational and developmental activities and thereby become a key factor in ensuring ownership and sustainability of the activities (Haverkort *et al* 1991).

As I end this rationale, I also argue that whilst I have provided enough reasons for selecting the socially critical orientation as the main lens for analysis, I recognise the fact that educational orientations are not necessarily exclusive, and neither are educational and social concerns. This highlights the need for flexibility and readiness to seek beyond and outside particular analytical lens to overcome limitations in interpreting social reality. This view finds support in the writings of Foucault (1973) and Nietzsche (1967). Foucault (1973: xiv) discussing the interpretation of discourse argues "Discourse ... is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels with different methods". This echoes Nietzsche's contention that "the more perspectives one can gain on the world, or any of its phenomena the richer and the deeper will be one's interpretations and knowledge" (Nietzsche 1967:326). Hence, whilst it is essential to be focussed in trying to understand social phenomena, it is inappropriate to restrict its analysis and interpretation to rigid frameworks, as no single analytical lens can appropriately explain reality on its own.

Concluding comment

This chapter has discussed the key terminology and concepts of the study, the relationship between development and the environmental crisis, the shaping of environmental education, the framework of educational orientations, their origins, features and manifestations in different settings, and the rationale for selecting a focussed but flexible analytical framework to analyse the study. Chapter three describes and discusses key elements of the participatory action research methodology adopted for the study, which shares the same critical assumptions as a socially critical orientation to education.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methodology of the study, that is, the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the research methodology and its relationship with the socially critical framework that informed the research, the research process, including data collection processes and techniques, data analysis and research quality (validity and ethics).

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

A number of factors compelled me to choose the socially critical emancipatory framework to guide this study as illustrated in chapter two (section 2.4). The critical tradition is premised on the view that there is no neutral education (Freire, 1970) and that there is no neutral research either (Lather, 1986a). Critical research is explicit about its intentions to empower, emancipate and transform the socially, economically, politically and ideologically powerless (Lather, 1991a).

I saw PAR methodology (Carr & Kemmis 1986, McTaggart 1997) as one of the surest ways one could effectively contribute to building capacity for natural resource management in a community context without necessarily creating undue and unsustainable influence on the process, outcomes and future. The study thus applied the principles of PAR in a community context, blending it with the philosophy, tools and techniques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)/Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) (Chambers, 1997).

PAR (Blackburn and Holland 1998, Reason, 1994, Carr and Kemmis 1986) as an approach to education, research and development is rooted in the socially critical framework. It derives a lot from the Freirian philosophy of liberation and empowerment through critical awareness building (Torres 1995). Participatory Action Research's main purpose is to produce knowledge in an active partnership with those affected by the knowledge and for the express purpose of improving their social, educational and material conditions (Bhana 1999:228). It emphasises a deliberate move by people to continuously learn from their own experiences in order to continuously improve their situation in life (Chambers, 1997 and Schwandt, 1997.)

Wadsworth (1998:16) defines PAR as 'research that involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts that make sense of it'.

3.2 FEATURES OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

PAR is distinct from other types of research because it triples as a method of enquiry, a pedagogical approach and a medium for action (Hall, 1981, Maguire, 1987). It is aimed not only at bringing people together for purposes of mutual development, but also at achieving understanding and change (Wadsworth, 1998). Through PAR, researchers seek to "actively involve people in generating knowledge about their own condition and how it can be changed, to stimulate social economic change based on the '*awakening*' of the common people and to '*empower*' the oppressed" (Chambers 1997:108). While critical research emphasises the 'oppressor oppressed' dichotomy, in this study I found no permanent oppressors and no permanent oppressed as power relations kept changing, depending on the situation on the ground (section 9.4.2.2).

Schwandt (1997) notes that PAR is distinguished from other types of research by three characteristics: a) its participatory character, b) its democratic impulse and c) its objective of producing useful knowledge and action, as well as consciousness rising. PAR is further distinguished by a unique approach to inquiry. This involves cycles of inquiry (McNiff *et al*, 1996) beginning with a situational analysis to identify key issues, followed by identifying and planning strategies to address the issues, implementing the plans, studying the implementation process, identifying new issues, planning and acting again (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, McTaggart, 1997). This approach makes PAR a comprehensive methodology of enquiry, learning and development.

PAR has also been classified as among other things: a participatory social process, practical and collaborative, emancipatory, recursive, critical and transformative (McTaggart 1997, Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). Unlike other research methods that are largely extractive, in PAR, as Schurink (1998:415) observes, "the actual research takes second place to the emergent processes of collaboration, mobilisation, empowerment, self-realisation and the establishment of community solidarity". As Lotz (1996:88) observed, "Action research with its

cycles of inquiry offers an open-ended emergent framework for structuring emerging democratic and action-based participatory research projects”. This made PAR in the case of this study, the appropriate methodology both at the theoretical and practical levels.

3.3 USING PRA/PLA METHODS TECHNIQUES IN PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

PAR methodology allows for an eclectic approach in which various data collection methods and techniques considered most appropriate for the situation are drawn on (Chambers 1997). As such, this research combined several research methods and techniques. PAR was particularly employed as an orienting form with a theoretical basis sound enough to embrace a wide range of participatory methods and approaches to research. The study made extensive use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)/ Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods and techniques. The two (PAR and PRA) are very closely related (Chambers: 1997) both in origin, philosophy, practice, and in intent and have been applied in different learning and development contexts with remarkable success. According to Chambers (1997:102-17), PRA is the offspring and an amalgam of insights and developments in a broad range of research, learning methods and approaches. He specifically points to “Action-Reflection Research, Agro-ecosystem Analysis, Applied Social Anthropology, Farming Systems Research and Rapid Rural Appraisal” as the roots of PRA. The Freirian liberatory philosophy, which contributed to major transformations in the fields of adult education and community development, has also been closely associated with the origins of general participatory research (Hall 1975, Lather 1986b).

Chambers (2001:2) has defined PRA/PLA as “A growing family of approaches, methods, attitudes and behaviours to enable and empower people to share, analyse and enhance their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act and monitor and evaluate”. It employs a series of participatory techniques with partners to analyse a situation/a problem and to plan, implement and evaluate in a systematic way. The major difference between PRA and PAR has been in fields of application. While PAR has been often used in formal learning situations PRA/PLA has been mostly applied in the non-formal community-based learning and research settings.

PRA/PLA stresses methods that are open-ended, participatory and often visual as well as verbal (Mukherjee 1993). The rationale for PLA lies in participants' knowledge of their needs,

capacities and weaknesses, the availability of resources within the community that can be profitably tapped for development purposes and the belief in the 'local people's' ability to plan and implement their own programmes. While I agree with this observation I also tend to disassociate with the tendency to refer to partners in the research and development process as 'local people'. This is because innocent, as people might be in using the term, it denotes a sense of 'otherness', and perpetuates the skewed power gradients PAR aims to level.

PRA emerged in the late 1980s and spread fast in the first half of the 1990s (Chambers 1997, Kane 1997). One of its major distinguishing features as a research approach is that it is non-extractive like Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), its closest 'ancestor'. While the major focus of RRA is the collection information by outsiders, often development/field workers, PRA is "a continuous research and action, managed by the local community" (Wilde 1998:21) *in collaboration with external facilitators (my addition)*. Other features highlighted by Chambers (2001), Kane (1997), and Mukherjee (1993) which I found relevant to this study include:

- Encouraging reversal learning, which implies recognising the knowledge and capacity of those people living within the study area, becoming co - learners and co-educators (Chambers, 1997)
- Using multiple techniques, methods, researchers and perspectives often referred to as triangulation (Chambers, 2001, Mukherjee, 1993)
- Adapting a progressive learning approach whereby the emerging information and insights gained are used to plan the next steps in the study (Kane, 1997)
- Deliberately seeking diversity by looking for variations on the pattern, exceptions and contradictions
- Using a wide range of techniques, some borrowed from existing disciplines and others developed to suit the contexts
- Drawing on a basket of techniques as the situation requires and encouraging researchers to use their best judgement in each situation, to learn from error and share information and experiences with other researchers (Wilde, 1998).

The above features and several other attributes of PRA made it an appropriate approach to use in this PAR study. This is not to say that PAR and sister methods and approaches rooted in the critical emancipatory research tradition have not been criticised and challenged. Critical emancipatory research has been critiqued and criticised on several grounds. Below are some

of the criticisms and challenges, followed by an illustration of how they were handled during the study.

3.4 POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH

Critical emancipatory research has been criticised for among other things elevating relevance and ignoring issues of rigour (Usher *et al* 1997). They also argue, “emancipatory research, both as research and as an educational process cannot afford to set up such a clear opposition between research outcomes and research rigour” (Usher 1997:194-5). To these authors, emancipatory research needs to consider and resolve issues of theory, method and empirical accountability in the same way that it focuses on the outcomes.

Critics of emancipatory research have also expressed some concern about the potential danger of emancipatory researchers either explicitly or implicitly imposing their meanings on situations, rather than negotiating them with research participants all in the name of emancipation (Usher *et al* 1997:196). The threat of imposition is mentioned again in relation to the central role of the agent of empowerment in the process of people’s emancipation, which seems to reduce power to a possession of the one who has it to bestow upon the other(s) (Gore 1992).

Feminist critics have also challenged some aspects of participatory emancipatory research. They have, for instance, argued against the failure of the research tradition to recognise the centrality of male power in the social construction of knowledge, failure by professionals to shed the façade of ‘expertism’ and the power that goes with it, e.g. wanting to be in control: to diagnose, prescribe, treat and hide uncertainty, even in situations where they should not (Martin 1997).

A number of these concerns may have serious effects on the character and integrity of knowledge generated using methods informed by the emancipatory interest. This calls for deliberate efforts in the design and execution of the research to counteract such effects. The section on data quality below is an illustration of the measures I took to minimise the effect of such limitations and to ensure the quality of the data collected.

3.5 ENSURING DATA QUALITY

Janse van Rensburg (2001), in her paper on the validity of knowledge claims in research makes two important observations:

- a) The way we understand the world - culturally and personally influences the way we approach our scientific investigations of the world, and the criteria we apply to judge those investigations
- b) Each tradition has its own rules for ensuring research quality.

This dispels any claims for homogeneity in research validation measures. Methods of validating qualitative research are different from those employed by positivist research. Positivist research emphasises the neutrality and objectivity of the researcher as some of the key safeguards against the 'contamination' of research findings by researcher biases and seeks generalisation, reliability and objectivity, often through statistical analysis of quantitative data (Usher *et al*, 1997). Critical emancipatory research ensures research quality through parameters like triangulation, prolonged field experience, reflexivity, member checking, peer examination, structural coherence, dense description, research process audit, and reference adequacy (Chambers 1997, Krefting 1991 (cited in Janse van Rensburg, 2001), Lather 1986b and Narayan 1995).

While it was not possible to apply all the above-listed strategies to ensure data quality in this study, I did select measures to improve the quality of the data and the process. I found stakeholder participation, triangulation, and review of data with stakeholders, collective development and implementation of and reflection on action plans and prolonged field experience very useful as strategies for validating data.

3.5.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is a concept borrowed from surveying, where it is used as a method of finding out where something is by getting a 'fix' on it from two or more places (Robson, 1993). It was felt that it could be applied in social research, where it would imply the use of multiple and different sources methods, investigators or theories (Denzin 1988). Many writers have adopted the description triangulation as the use of multiple measures, data sources, methods, tools and people (Chambers 1997, Kemmis and McTaggart 2000, Kincheloe 1991, Lather 1986 a & b, Narayan 1995 and Wilde 1997). Robson (1993:383) sees triangulation as an "indispensable

tool in real world enquiry". It is often used as a way to crosscheck information for accuracy and reliability.

Triangulation was the main strategy employed in this study to establish the validity of the data. We triangulated at different levels and in different ways including several data collection methods, which varied according to situation, timing and data, required. We also triangulated data sources and the research team. Information was generated from different categories of members of the community, grouped on the basis of gender, age, economic status and economic interest (Wilde 1997). The research team was gender sensitive and multi-disciplinary, consisting of agriculturalists, educators, economists, a sociologist and one animal husbandry specialist.

3.5.2 Critical friends

There were many occasions when I felt confused and unsure whether I was actually doing the right thing or getting the correct data. In such cases, I received invaluable assistance from two of my colleagues in the Department of Adult Education and Communication Studies at Makerere University. The two gave me audience and I 'downloaded' my field experiences, confusions and challenges. The discussions that ensued often cleared a lot of my confusion and I went back to the field refreshed and focussed. After four months of participatory engagement with the community, I realised that the nature of responses and experiences generated during community meetings and workshops were not revealing enough to enable us understand the low response to the learning, and in some cases total lack of action in response to the training. One of these colleagues suggested that I change the strategy and engage in more person-to-person discussions about individuals' general ways of life (triangulation of methods and approach). The strategy worked well and through it I was able to discover that not all those who participated in the training activities actually regarded agriculture as their main source of livelihood. The fact that I had people to share my experiences with provided the cathartic effect I needed to keep moving in times when I felt emotionally and intellectually challenged by the progress of the study.

3.5.3 Catalytic Validity

The aim of emancipatory studies like this one is to initiate a process of transformation within the lives of the affected people through a deliberate process of empowerment. Thus as Lather (1986) argues, such research is not neutral, implying that the epistemological commitments are

to the generation of “knowledge in the service of emancipation”. The validity of such knowledge, according to Usher *et al* (1997:192), is therefore not “a function of generalisability and its capacity for predictive control ... but rather its usefulness or efficacy in enabling the empowerment of the oppressed groups”

In this research, we saw empowerment of all participants as an outstanding goal of the entire process, and through the use of empowering methods, techniques and approaches, we endeavoured to achieve it. The results are therefore also judged according to the criterion of catalytic validity, as discussed by Reason and Rowan (1981), Brown and Tandom (1978), Lather (1986b) and Janse van Rensburg (2001). Here research is validated by the degree to which, through the process, participants are re-oriented, focussed and energised by understanding the reality around them in order to transform it. This is a sign of empowerment that Usher *et al* (1997:187) define as “an understanding of the causes of powerlessness, recognising systematically oppressive forces and acting individually and collectively to change the conditions of life”.

3.5.4 Crosschecking by stakeholders

This being a participatory study, the crosschecking of information by different stakeholders was an integral component of the research process (Narayan 1995). This was done in several ways including: the sharing of PRA findings with all participants in plenary sessions before leaving the field, peer review of data pieces and daily debriefing sessions among the research team about the previous day’s work.

3.5.5 Prolonged field experience

I spent a total of eighteen months in the field working within the community. This helped me to gain what Lather (1991:57) refers to as movement “from the status of stranger to friend and thus be able to gather personal knowledge more easily”. After the first four months in the field I was no longer a stranger, to many I was a ‘*mulimisa*’ (agricultural extension worker) like any other. It was even difficult for me to distinguish the researcher in me from the common VEDCO development worker for all of us did exactly the same things, although my agenda was a little wider. For the VEDCO staff, it was even more difficult to appreciate the difference between me, and the rest. Although in the beginning staff at different levels behaved in a reserved manner

towards me, some referring to me as Mr Babikwa, others as 'sir', by the end of the first three months, the attitude had changed for the better. Staff had started to address me by my first name and many times various staff members showed great surprise and commended the way I 'humbled' myself and fitted in amongst them. This was not a big problem to me given my educational and professional background. The long stay also enabled me to see VEDCO and the communities in their natural state. For, after several months, all the pretence and cosmetic behaviours that we might have assumed in the beginning had faded and we became our real selves.

3.6 ETHICS AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN THIS RESEARCH

Participatory research projects in community contexts constitute a broader range of ethical issues than ordinary research projects. The highly interactive nature of the projects demands greater understanding, change of attitude, openness and patience on the part of the researchers. These call for deliberate steps to be taken by the researchers to be able to build the necessary rapport and maintain it. In the case of this research, I had to apply to the National Council of Science and Technology for permission to conduct the study in the country. This is a procedure that legitimates research projects and accords the researcher access to national data banks and institutional records.

Access to the NGO was granted by NGO leadership, which also provided entry into the community, since the NGO had established itself as a resident partner. I was introduced to the Director of VEDCO by one of the board members, who in turn introduced me to staff. While this was a good start, I did not consider it sufficient. I organised a mini workshop to orient staff to the research project and to brainstorm our various expectations of the research. In this workshop, we also outlined the different roles of the stakeholders in the research and set a joint agenda with VEDCO staff.

This research project was accepted by VEDCO and integrated into VEDCO's programmes and, because of this, I stopped being referred to as an outsider, but became a member of the VEDCO staff, in the field of technical support to extension workers. This meant that, while the data collected served my research interest, it also directly addressed VEDCO's organisational goals.

Chambers (1997:153) gives useful hints on the role of rapport building in creating a good working environment for participatory researchers. To him by “outsiders taking time, not rushing, showing respect, explaining who they are, answering questions, being honest, and interested and asking to be taught, being taught and learning” rapport can be quickly built and maintained. My background as an adult educator and development worker within community contexts like the one in the study had turned most of the issues identified by Chambers into part of my daily working principles and hence a very big asset when it came to interacting with the people either as individuals or in groups. I was also helped by the fact that the community had come to know me as one of the VEDCO staff. Even in cases when I conducted individual interviews, I spent less time explaining the purpose of my visit for two reasons:

- a) the people already knew me as part of their partner organisation,
- b) Most of the interview questions reflected what we had already done with the rest of the VEDCO team during workshops and home visits.

Most importantly as Lather (1991:57) argues, emancipatory research should go beyond the concern for more and better data to a concern for research as praxis, which aims to enable participants not only to understand but also to change their situations. In the case of this research, it was not a normal externally motivated academic exercise, but part of a concrete community-based agenda to address problems and challenges at the local level. This does not mean that there were no problems and inconsistencies (see sections 10.2 and 10.3), but whatever the case the motivation and intent was emancipatory.

3.7 THE RESEARCH PROCESS (Pre-data collection processes)

3.7.1 Selecting the study site and the host organisation

When I drew up the research proposal, I had not decided on the specific location of the study, although I considered Volunteers’ Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO) and Multi-Purpose Education and Employment centre (MPEEC) as NGOs with a potential to host the study. I thus proposed to undertake an initial exploratory study of the two organisations to establish the one most appropriate as a case to be studied. Informed by my research goals in chapter one, I used the criteria below, which I established during the proposal development stage, to determine which of the two NGOs to study.

The extent to which the NGO was community-based in terms of:

- Addressing general and specific problems of the community,
- Involvement of the local people in NGO activities and at what levels,

- The role of the community in decision-making in NGO activities, and
- The extent to which environmental education was a priority in the agenda of the NGO.

3.7.2 Exploratory visits to Multi-Purpose and VEDCO

I made initial visits to the NGOs in December 1999. In both cases, I interviewed the relevant persons and also accessed programme documents detailing their vision and mission statements, strategies, programmes and activities. I realised after the visits and review of documents that the NGOs had a lot in common. Both of them met the criteria for consideration as being community-based in most of the respects I had laid down.

The similarities between the two organisations posed a new challenge, forcing me to think about other criteria for selecting one and not the other. The new criteria considered the following aspects:

- a) Accessibility from my home and place of work, both in terms of distance and quality of road network,
- b) Professional disposition (relevant training and experience in natural resource management), openness and sociability of staff and executive,
- c) Evidence of people's projects supported by the NGO and the quality of those projects,
- d) Availability of documentation about the organisation's programmes and activities,

These criteria worked better for me and were approved during the visit to the field by my supervisor, in January 2000.

3.7.3 Justification for the choice of VEDCO

After the visits to the organisations with my supervisor, we selected VEDCO as the case to be studied. The organisation operates at a distance of forty-three kilometres from my home and work place, as opposed to the MPEEC, which operated one hundred thirty kilometres and located away on a very busy highway. VEDCO had a well-laid out organisational structure, with four departments, Agric-trade and Marketing, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security, Capacity Building and Training, and Rural Credit Finance.

Relevantly qualified staff with graduate qualifications in their respective areas headed all departments. All departments had qualified and experienced mid-level and frontline staff implementing the programme at community level. I considered staff at the two levels essential

for my study, as I was to work with them for most of the research project. Multi-Purpose had neither the structure nor the type of staff VEDCO had.

Although both NGOs had ongoing community-based programmes, VEDCO's activities appeared better organised and supported. In addition, VEDCO had a significant collection of well-managed records and documents easily accessible, as and whenever I wanted them.

3.7.4 Research sites

By the time I began the study, VEDCO operated mainly in one district, Luwero, although plans to start similar activities in the neighbouring districts of Mpigi, Mubende and Mukono were at an advanced stage. The study was conducted in two of the three counties of Luwero district, Katikamu and Bamunanika. I selected the four parishes of Kiteme and Kibirizi in Bamunanika county, and Musaale and Migadde in Katikamu county (see map 4.1) as the location of the study. The selection of these parishes was based on three reasons: a) all of them were new programme areas where activities only beginning for the first time, which I felt would provide a good opportunity to work with a growing programme, b) while in other parishes VEDCO treated a number of activities with similar emphasis, in these four, sustainable food security and poverty alleviation through sustainable agriculture were to be the main focus of activities, the very activities in which I was interested, and c) unlike other areas that hosted many non-governmental organisations doing the same things, only VEDCO was operating in these four.

3.7.5 Getting started

Emancipatory research demands that researchers become equal partners with all stakeholders in the endeavour (Chambers 1997, McTaggart 1997, and Wilde 1997). Getting integrated in the organisational structures and programmes was thus top of the agenda at this stage.

This was a very crucial phase of the study, as the way I handled it would impact on the entire study and beyond. As a first step, I discussed with the Executive Board my ideas about PAR as practitioner research, the goals and methodology, the necessity for the total integration of the study into the organisation's activities, and the importance of members of staff participating as equal partners in the venture. I emphasised the need to view the research project not as an external factor added to the NGO's activities, but as a necessary component to be permanently integrated into the NGO's processes.

Thereafter, the Executive Director introduced me to the management team, comprising the four heads of departments and chaired by the Executive Director himself. This team does all the management and planning functions of the organisation. For the first four months, I attended all the management meetings and participated in decision-making processes in many ways. For instance, I made two early observations while participating in the practical agriculture training workshops, which resulted in some significant changes in the organisation. I identified some weaknesses in the training strategy, methodology and attitude of field workers and raised them in the management meeting. As a result, we held an initial review workshop to re-examine the implementation strategy with all middle-level and grass-root staff. The outcome of this workshop will be discussed in chapters five and six.

During the month of February 2000, I spent time reviewing VEDCO's activity reports and programme documents (see Table 3.1). I found three documents (DC 01, DC 02 and DC 03, see Table 3.1) particularly useful in the initial phase of the study

3.7.6 Initial changes in the original plan

In my initial study design (in chapter 1), I had planned to begin with a major baseline study to establish the contextual profile for the entire community. We intended to use the information generated as raw material for developing an educational response to environmental and other development challenges identified. I discovered from the documents I reviewed that there was already a significant amount of baseline information about the communities and the NGO's activities. The NGO had, for example, just completed a comprehensive baseline study on food security and nutrition, household economy, agricultural production, access to, control and utilisation of resources in households and child health and well-being, a month before I arrived at VEDCO. After a discussion with the NGO personnel, we agreed that it was not necessary to conduct a similar study within the same community in a period of less than three months. The NGO staff had used the findings of the baseline study to develop a new training programme towards the end of February 2000 (see section 5.4.1).

3.7.7 Training in Participatory Action Research: staff orientation to the research project

It was agreed during the research orientation workshop that we hold training sessions in participatory action research before integrating it into the research process. The NGO management granted us five afternoons from 2.00pm to 5.00pm to hold the training sessions in PAR. I decided to use the same opportunity to orient programme officers and extension

workers to the research project. These two staff categories constituted the research team I was to work with during the entire project. They included three Programme Officers and ten Extension/field staff. All programme officers were university graduates with qualifications in marketing, agriculture and social sciences. The extension/field workers had tertiary qualifications at diploma level in agriculture and natural resource management.

Although all staff had had prior experience in research, either as assistants or administrators, none of them had ever been involved in Participatory Action Research. They had, for example, expected me to develop questionnaires, observation and interview schedules for them to administer to a chosen population. Because of this view of research, many were confused as to how the research would be conducted. To dispel the confusion, I asked the NGO management to grant us one afternoon to hold a workshop to discuss the research project and draw up strategies for its implementation with all frontline and mid-level staff.

3.7.8 Research familiarisation workshop

We began the workshop by developing an inventory of participants' research experiences, discussed participants' understanding of research and their expectations of this particular research.

The nature of research experiences varied, with some participants having a wealth of, and others very limited of it. It also came out clearly that the majority of participants, due to their natural science/agriculture backgrounds, had participated in research in areas like pest management, crop multiplication, disease control, and crop trials. Those with social science backgrounds had participated in surveys, evaluations and, some of them, participatory rural appraisals.

In most cases, the participants' view of research was that it was finding out, generating information or studying phenomena (Usher *et al* 1997), as opposed to research as a medium for change, transformation and empowerment. My role thus became to introduce the emancipatory dimension of research, through a systematic orientation to Participatory Action Research.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION (Situations and methods)

Data was collected at two levels; the organisational level with the extension workers and other VEDCO staff where I was part of the programme implementation team; and within the villages with the farmers who were VEDCO's partners. That was because as PAR researchers aiming at among other things the professional development of the practitioners themselves, it was essential that we investigated our own actions. Within the community, data was collected at village level as part of the of the programme implementation process for two purposes, namely: to generate information on how to strengthen the programme implementation process and the character of the participatory processes

In March 2000, VEDCO began to implement the newly developed programme in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security. The programme had the following components:

- Community mobilisation,
- Selection of twenty-five lead farmers from each parish,
- Training of the selected lead-farmers in practical skills in sustainable agriculture,
- Establishment of one major demonstration garden in each of the parishes,
- Establishment of mini demonstration gardens by each of the lead farmers in their villages to be used for training farmers locally,
- Recruitment and training of at least ten farmers by each of the lead farmers as a multiplier effect,
- Village-based farmers' workshops and
- Follow-up farm visits by extension staff

Each of the above components was used as an occasion to collect data, using different methods and techniques as summarised in (Table 3.1) below.

Table 3.1: Summary of Data collection processes and sources

<i>When collected</i>	<i>Data type</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>Method of data collection</i>	<i>Situation</i>
January-February 2000	Data file (DF) 01 Review notes on organisational structure, plans activities and programmes	<p>Document (DC) 01 Food security and farm enterprise baseline</p> <p>DC 02 External evaluation report for the 1996-1999 funding period</p> <p>(DC 03) VEDCO internal review report for the period 1996-1998</p> <p>(DC 04) Quarterly reports</p> <p>(DC 05) Strategic review and planning workshop report</p> <p>(DC 06) VEDCO strategic plan</p> <p>(DC 07) Food security and farm enterprise project document</p> <p>(DC 08) Donors' communication and reports</p>	Document review and analysis	These were my initial days of interaction with VEDCO after deciding to do the study with them
	(DF 02) Information about the organisation, programmes and activities	Executive Director and programme coordinators	Unstructured Interview	These were the early days when I was still trying to understand the organisation
March-April 2000	(DF 03) Personal notes on Practical Agric training workshops	Personal participation in practical training activities, extension workers	Observations, Informal discussions with extension workers	This was a period of orientation to the organisation and its activities. Spent most of the time attending different training and sensitisation meetings in

When collected	Data type	Data Source	Method of data collection	Situation
	<p>(DF 03) Personal notes on the training of extension workers in Sustainable Agric practices and ext methods</p> <p>(DF 04) Workshop notes, personal notes on extension workers' field experiences and views on research</p> <p>(DF 05)-Personal notes on practical agriculture training in Migadde & Katikamu parishes</p> <p>(DF 06) Personal notes on community experiences with the training and demonstration establishment.</p>	<p>Observations</p> <p>Extension workers, Programme officer Agric</p> <p>Participation in training sessions</p> <p>-Farmers and extension workers</p>	<p>2-Participant observation</p> <p>3-Mini workshops to share field experiences and to introduce the idea of participatory action research</p> <p>-Observations and informal discussions with ext workers and a few farmers</p> <p>-Home visits informal discussions, photographs</p>	<p>the community</p> <p>2-I participated as a trainee in these workshops to learn what is expected of ext workers in the field. It was a good orientation for me</p> <p>3-These were initial meetings attended by ext workers and the Programme officer agriculture. It was a new innovation, which I asked the ED to introduce to enable ext workers to learn from each other's experiences and to address challenges they encountered in the field.</p> <p>4-I spent time observing training sessions by ext workers to get a picture of how they conducted the training sessions.</p> <p>5-This was also part of my orientation within the community. I visited the four different parishes with the programme officer and we did on-the-spot checks on the community main and sub demonstration gardens</p>
May 2000	(DF 07) Personal notes on the internal reflection workshop, proceedings of the workshop	-Extension workers, Executive Directive & Programme officers	Brainstorming, visualisation in participation	6-This internal mini workshop resulted from my observation of how extension workers were training in the field and

When collected	Data type	Data Source	Method of data collection	Situation
			Programmes and buzz groups	also talking to some farmers, the extension workers themselves and the executive director. The purpose was to critically examine the process of implementation and the challenges arising therefrom.
August 2000	(DF 08)-Report of the strategic review and planning workshop, record of the workshop proceedings (taped)	-Extension workers, VEDCO executive and management	-SWOT analysis, group work and plenary presentations and discussions	7-This workshop was a result of the issues identified in the internal mini workshop and it was facilitated by two external facilitators to give it a sense of neutrality and objectivity in the analysis of issues.
October 2000	(DF 09) Notes on review meeting with the community	-Farmer representatives and parish overseers	-VIPP and brainstorming	8-The purpose of this workshop was to share the outcomes of the strategic planning workshop with the community while at the same time getting their own views on VEDCO activities and methods of work.
November 2000	(DF 10)-Proceedings of the PRA training for staff, Workshop report, Documentation of PRA processes in Bajjo & Bakijjulula	-Process observation, ext workers & community	-Participant observation and several other PRA techniques	This training workshop for extension workers provided gave a great opportunity to observe the training capabilities of ext workers, try out session based learner participatory assessment and to collect baseline information from the community in to parishes.
December 2000	(DF 11) Summary PLA reports and notes for Musale, Migadde, Kiteme, Kibirizi & Kikoma parishes, photographs and diagrams.	Communities in Musaale, Migadde, Kiteme and Kibirizi	PRA/PLA techniques	The PRA/PLA activities through which the data was collected served a double purpose, the community and VEDCO staff explored in detail the social

When collected	Data type	Data Source	Method of data collection	Situation
				economic and environmental situation and as a result jointly developed community action plans.
February 2001	(DF 12) Notes of the mini workshop on criteria for selection of lead farmers, and food security redefinition	Ext workers, Executive Director, Programme Officer agric, Coordinator PLAN.	VIPP, brainstorming	This was a response to issues raised during the PRA workshops regarding the previous definition of FS and Criteria for lead farmer selection.
Mar-June 2001	(DF 13) -60 Farmer interviews, (DF 14) Extension workers' interviews, (DF 15) 3 Interviews with lead farmers (DF 16) 1 programme manager interview, (DF 17) Exe. Director interview, (DF 18) Data on HH well being	Farmers, extension workers, lead farmers, Pro manager, Executive director	Semi-structured interviews, well being analysis income & expenditure trees & matrices, daily activity charts, observations.	During this period I intensified the collection of data from individual participants. The purpose was to explore in detail the issues not well brought out during the more participatory phase of the research.
December 2001	(DF 18) Focus group discussion notes from Extension workers (DF 19)	Extension workers	Focus group discussion	This was the last phase of data collection. I held focus group discussions with extension workers and a selection of farmers to establish the extent to which participatory action research had got integrated into the NGO's way of doing things.

Source: Data Collected

3.8.1 An overview of the methods and techniques used

This is an overview of the different research methods and techniques used during the research. It does not constitute all I have to say about research methods, as there will be further discussion at the appropriate time and in the relevant sections of the other chapters. This is in view of the fact that this was largely practitioner research, whereby the process is as important a subject of enquiry as the content and outcome of the programme.

3.8.2 Methods of data collection

To say the least, this was a highly eclectic study (LeCompte *et al* 1992) in that I made a careful selection of what I considered the best methods and techniques from among the many available, to generate the necessary data. In the next few pages, I give a brief description of the different methods and techniques I used to generate data and the criteria used for the selection of each.

3.8.2.1 Observation

Literature on research methodology presents observation, as one of the research methods researchers cannot afford to ignore. Apart from often being involuntary, observation is one of the most effective ways of not only verifying information generated using different methods, from different sources, but also capturing some of those bits of information, either ignored or difficult to pick using other methods (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, and Kelly, 1999). Robson (1993: 190), for instance, confirms the centrality of observation to any form of inquiry. In his view:

As the actions and behaviour of people are a central aspect in virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to describe, analyse and interpret that we have observed.

My experience during fieldwork wholly concurs with Robson's observation. During the entire period of data collection, I found myself voluntarily and involuntarily engaged in observing happenings for the benefit of the study, both on a planned and unplanned basis. The unique aspect about PAR is that unlike other types of research where one can observe without participating, here the researcher is a participant in all processes thus becoming an automatic participant observer and, as Erickson (1992) observed, a beneficiary of the learning opportunities presented by the active involvement. My capacity to observe made me the most essential 'research instrument' in the study. I observed these happenings as learning opportunities and at times to unlearn a number of things I had long learnt and practiced. I

recorded all the important aspects I observed as part of my field notes and will be reporting on them in chapters four, six, seven and eight.

3.8.2.2 Document Review

Irwin (2001) observed that the meaning of the term 'documents' has shifted since the last part of the 19th century from exclusively referring to paper records to include electronic records of various kinds. This implies that documents are of varying types and for the research purpose can be viewed as either primary or secondary sources of data. In the case of this study, I reviewed several documents for both primary and secondary information used in this thesis. The review of documents served in the following ways: a) to orientate me to the NGO programmes and activities, b) to track the different trends in the NGO and c) to explore government policy issues (see table 3.1). While documents are a valuable source of information, it is also true that they can be unreliable as they are subject to the biases and limitations of the authors. My interaction with documents, especially as primary data sources, illustrated this concern in clearer terms. Some of the documents I thought essential for my study had been generated using an approach that contradicted declared goals and expectations of the organisation and as such did not represent a true picture of what they were supposed to stand for. The food security and farm enterprise baseline study document was a case in point.

3.8.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Robson (1993:237) describes the semi-structured interview as:

Where the interviewer has worked out a set of questions in advance, but is free to modify their order based on her perception of what seems most appropriate in the context of the conversation, can change the way they are worded, give explanations, and leave out particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee or include additional ones.

I found the semi-structured interviews one of the most appropriate methods of generating information from farmers and extension workers because of its flexibility as described by Robson above. I had initially designed a more structured interview guide, but after the pre-test with a number of farmers in Ggembe village, which had not been selected for the study, I realised that there was a lot of information that had not been captured and could not be captured unless the respondents were given a chance to communicate freely. Second, by its very nature, structured interviewing generates an air of formality that can lead to unnecessary tensions among respondents. During the pre-test, it even turned my encounters with the extension workers very formal, tense and official, yet I had interacted with them for a long time

and above all I had chosen an informal path and orientation to the research. Semi-structured interviews also proved vital in generating information that I used to cover the gaps in data from the more participatory methods. I particularly used this tool to generate data from farmers during the second phase of the research to ascertain the actual influence of the programme on the farmers in their different categories. In this case I held interviews with sixty purposely selected farmers (see section 8.6.1).

3.8.2.4 Key Informant Interviews

I conducted key informant interviews with the Executive Director of VEDCO, the programme co-ordinators and lead farmers. Key informant interviews aim to capture the interviewee's perception within a particular context (Robson 1993, Wilde 1997). Key informant interviews do not differ much from semi-structured interviews apart from the fact that they are meant for a clearly predefined set of respondents whose positions accord them a right to certain information that others in the same environment may not have. In the case of the above respondents, I felt that the positions they occupied in the organisation accorded them the role of custodians of valuable information about the organisation and its activities.

3.8.2.5 PRA/PLA methodology

The information we obtained from the initial review workshop organised to reflect on the progress of the programme activities alerted us to a number of weaknesses in the programme implementation and strategy that required a change of approach. As a response to the challenges identified, we decided to make the programme more participatory and responsive by introducing the use of PRA methods and techniques (Chambers 2001, Chambers 1997, Kane 1997, Mukherjee 1993, Wilde 1997).

Table 3.2 Summary of PRA/PLA tools/techniques used to explore community issues (Details of the processes are incorporated into the relevant sections of the different chapters)

Issues	Tools/Techniques
Demographic Characteristics	Social map and household interviews
Community resources/Social Services	FGD (women and men), semi structured interviews, observations and idea cards
Livelihood Analysis -income and expenditure -income sources/activities -food security structure	Wealth ranking, livelihood analysis, income and expenditure trees and matrices, prioritisation/ranking techniques
Land use, land tenure, soil and water conservation, agro-forestry, crop husbandry, livestock farming, food security and nutrition, marketing, weather and climate	Resource maps, transect walks, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions
Character of community problems	Problem tree

3.8.2.6 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

A focus group is a general term given to a research interview conducted with people in a group. The people must share a similar type of experience and socio-economic, ethnic, age and gender backgrounds (Kelly 1999, Madriz 2000). The kinds of issues discussed are those mutually interesting to the researcher and the people themselves. Focus group discussions are facilitated by at least two people although a third one can be an added advantage. There is normally the facilitator, the recorder if a tape recorder is not used, and an observer. The role of an observer is to record all the non-verbal communication that goes on during the discussion. Groups should not be too big or too small. A minimum of six and a maximum of ten will do.

In this research, we used focus group discussions in two ways. It was used as one of the PRA methods to generate information from different interest groups within communities as illustrated in chapters five and six. It was also used as an independent method to generate information from VEDCO staff in the last cycle of research. In both cases I prepared focus group discussion guides with not more than ten broad questions that we administered. I had to orient the entire research team in the use of the method, in particular how to moderate, how and what to record and for the observer what to observe and how to go about it.

3.8.2.7 Buzz groups

Buzz groups are not commonly used as a data collection method, but rather as a teaching method. They involve a small group of people, often between three and eight, discussing a specific issue or subject for a period not exceeding ten minutes, and coming up with answers to a given problem. In this research we used it as an innovative and secure way of generating information from VEDCO staff during review, planning meetings and workshops. The method was thought appropriate to elucidate issues individual members did not want to mention in the plenary sessions for fear of victimisation. It was also used as one of the techniques for generating information for plenary discussions during workshops.

3.8.2.8 Visualisation in Participatory Programmes (VIPP)

Apel and Camozzi (1996:117) describe VIPP as a people-centred approach to planning and other group events. They summarised it as a “creative combination of a number of different methods that have been evolved over time by experienced adult educators ... used in a specialised workshop format”. The method is also described as an interactive participatory process that can be used in many different ways. While VIPP was originally used as a planning tool to identify, define and find solutions to problems, it is increasingly being used as an

invaluable tool in training and research in community contexts. The method involves the use of paper cards on which individual participants write their original ideas on a given topic. The cards are pinned on a board and later clustered with the help of participants, mapping out emerging themes related to the issue being analysed. These are further discussed to clarify issues and factors of importance (McKee 1993). I found this an invaluable method of data generation, particularly in the workshops internally organised for VEDCO staff. Apart from generating a wide range of data, it helped in breaking the culture of fear-induced silence among VEDCO staff. This method encourages the principle of anonymity with regard to the authorship of ideas, appropriateness of all ideas as opposed to correctness and discourages the tendency to pin ideas to persons. It made participants feel free to contribute ideas, however controversial, without fear of victimisation.

3.8.2.9 Workshops

Workshops are normally used as learning forums in which learners can practically engage in a number of learning activities for the effective development of important practical and technical skills to address challenges in their working lives. When I embarked on the research project at VEDCO, I found that workshops were among the major means used for capacity-building of staff and partners in the communities. I decided to use them as a key opportunity to further the goals of the research by working with the organisers in the planning of workshops, so as to integrate a research component.

Four types of workshops were common in VEDCO:

- a) internally organised, but conducted by external facilitators
- b) internally organised for the sole purpose of learning new things and facilitated by staff
- c) internally organised mainly to review activities and chart future strategies
- d) organised by the organisation, but for VEDCO's partners, the farmers in the community and often conducted in the field.

All four types of workshops were used as occasions for data generation. Workshops proved useful in three ways; through them I was able to explore, among other things, the potential and capacities of VEDCO staff as educators, identify potential areas of intervention, and also the group dynamics in the organisation.

We tried to make the workshops as participatory as we could by using a number of participatory methods and techniques. It was in such workshops that we used methods such as buzz groups, brainstorming, and visualisation in participatory programmes (VIPP).

3.8.2.10 Informal discussions

Because I chose to become a full-time participant in the activities of the organisation, I often found myself engaged in informal discussions not necessarily as part of the research, but all the same generating very useful information for the study. Such discussions were not limited to VEDCO staff, but also included communities with whom VEDCO worked. Informal discussions covered a wide range of issues from organisational policy to interpersonal relations and the day-to-day running of the organisation. Through such discussions I was able to learn a number of things regarding staff and partners' attitudes towards the way VEDCO as an organisation functioned and perceived weaknesses and strengths of the organisation, most of which I incorporated into the field notes. My choice of this method was influenced by my interaction with literature by Hope *et al* (1984) on developing critical awareness using the Freirian approach. They argue that one of the keys to discovering the deepest feelings of a local community is listening to and engaging in people's informal conversations to get a feel for the issues about which they have the strongest feelings. In their view, which I actually embraced and found useful, as one engages in informal discussions, one should listen for what are people

- Worried about?
- Happy about?
- Sad about?
- Angry about?
- Fearful about?
- Hopeful about?

I found these guidelines very useful in shaping the direction of my informal interactions with both VEDCO staff and partners in the community.

3.8.2.11 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis

SWOT analysis is a framework for analysing one's strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats a person or an organisation faces. It is intended to help the person or organisation concerned to focus on the strengths, minimise weaknesses and take the greatest possible advantage of the opportunities available (Hussey 1998, Melcher and Kerzner 1988).

SWOT is not usually employed as a research method, but rather as a tool for strategic planning. During this research, however, I found it necessary to employ SWOT analysis on a number of occasions. This was as a result of the integration of PAR into the implementation strategy for the NGO programme. We were often confronted with situations where we had to make an honest assessment of the programme and thereafter make informed decisions on how to progress. SWOT analysis became an invaluable tool in such situations (see section 7.2).

3.8.2.12 Field Diaries

McNiff (1988) discusses the research diary as one of the most effective methods of monitoring one's action research. Its essential purpose is to keep track of events taking place during the research period.

Important as it is to the research process, I found it difficult to keep a diary in the initial days of the study. I had never before developed the habit of keeping a personal journal for any purpose. However, when I became immersed in the daily activities of the NGO and the communities as part of the research process, I realised its necessity and trained myself and the research team to keep one.

I encouraged all members of the team to keep research diaries and to make daily recordings of all the important happenings during their interaction with the farmers in the field, during training sessions and farm visits. In addition, the diaries were meant to capture the details about each individual's way of life, the socio-economic and physical environment of the individual and the communities in question. In my case, I used the diary as a point of reference when re-examining my personal views, stand and commitments regarding the study.

Not being habituated diary keepers, the greatest challenge the team had in the beginning was to remember to record everything. This was particularly the case with extension workers who made up the bulk of the research team. They had been used to keeping simple records of appointments with farmers or their supervisors, which was less than the research required. To overcome this, I developed a new strategy of each member sharing his or her field experiences with the rest in a weekly research team meeting. In addition, I photocopied my own field diary notes as samples for them to see how and what to record. The strategy seemed to work and, in the days that followed I saw a great change in the amount and quality of diary notes. To my

dismay, however, on my return after two months back at Rhodes University in July 2000, I found that all but one had abandoned the practice. Some complained that they were very busy while others confessed to laziness as the cause. This made me realise two things: a) the difficulties in integrating action research practices into an established organisation with a variety of goals and agendas, and b) while laziness was a personal problem, the issue of lack of time due to tight work schedules was a real obstacle, even during my presence. Extension workers were too preoccupied with 'creating' results, in order to please their employers and donors to do anything else.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

My view of data analysis is that it is a process of making sense out of the different sets of data collected from the field. McNiff (1988) and Poggenpoel (1998) concur with this view.

Qualitative research in general and participatory research in particular is unique in several ways. In the first place, the data concerned appears in words, not in numbers as is the case with quantitative research (Miles and Huberman 1984). Secondly, the data analysis is a continuous process and, as Narayan (1995) argues; disentangling data collection, analysis, dissemination and use is often difficult in participatory research as the same people participate in all activities. The process begins with data collection and continues through to the period when the final report is written (Robson 1993). The analysis was largely guided by the socially critical emancipatory view of education, training and research that guided the study design, including the research questions and objectives (see section 2.3.5). Robson (1993) sees the strategy of basing data analysis on theoretical propositions as a powerful aid in guiding analysis, for it helps in indicating where and on what attention should be focused.

3.9.1 Data analysis during fieldwork

I decided to structure the data analysis process in four distinct phases namely: field-based analysis, post-field analysis, pre-write up and write-up analysis.

3.9.1.1 Field-based analysis

Field based analysis was a continuous process intended to ensure the quality of data and the extent to which I was moving in the anticipated direction. For the quality of data, each member of the team reviewed his or her field notes before exchanging them with a colleague for peer

review. The sharing of the results by the entire team to identify the emerging issues to be followed up in the subsequent field activities followed the peer reviews. This was mainly the case with data collected during training, sensitisation workshops and field visits.

The analysis of data generated during PRA/PLA sessions differed from the above in that communities were fully involved in the process. While the data generation process involved significant levels of analysis, at the end of every PLA field day, a plenary session was held for the entire group to share the outcomes of the activities conducted by different individuals and sub-groups. The sharing involved getting feedback on the data from all participants. The feedback included among other things clarification, reaching consensus on issues, correcting wrong information and at times reconstructing the facts. On my part, I used this opportunity to ask critical questions to help participants think more about the facts as presented, challenge their authenticity and re-examine them before finally accepting them as a true representation of the situation in the community.

3.9.2 Post-field data analysis

Post-field data analysis was entirely done by the research team. Here we read through all the data scripts and re-examined all PRA diagrams as a team, in order to identify emerging issues and themes. At the end of this analysis, a report would be written and another community meeting arranged to share the outcome for the second time and to get the community's view of our interpretation of the situation. The outcome of the community meeting determined the next step in the subsequent field days. Through this we were often able to identify the areas that needed emphasis, needed revisiting or which had been well catered for. In this way, the future of the research process was continually shaped.

3.9.2.1 Pre-thesis write-up analysis

Pre-thesis write-up analysis turned out to be the most challenging of the different levels of analysis. Although we had spent a lot of time analysing during fieldwork, it was not sufficient to prepare me for the actual writing of the thesis.

I began this stage of analysis by 'cleaning' the data. This involved among other things

- a) Reading the transcripts to ensure that what was recorded was complete;
- b) Establishing the amount of data available by developing a data inventory;

c) Transcribing the tapes and re-listening to previously transcribed ones (I realised in the course of reading through the notes transcribed by one of the extension workers that she had summarised much of the discussions, leaving out vital details. This compelled me to re-listen to all previously transcribed tapes to cover the gaps);

d) Re-reading the data transcripts from different sources for the second time to sort out what was usable and what was not; and

e) Establishing the emerging patterns of meanings from different sources to develop data categories and themes.

Re-reading the transcripts revealed the wealth of data that I had collected, but the challenge ahead was still to organise them in a way that would make sense and build a coherent argument for the thesis.

All data were entered in Microsoft Word, edited and printed out to get physical copies to be used in the later stages of analysis and write-up. I established computer and physical files for each of the data sets from the different sources. I did a manual analysis by reading through each of the responses and mapping out similarities, differences and unique findings in order to develop the themes and other issues for discussion in the thesis.

Establishing data categories across the different data sets was a big challenge. Having arranged data from different sources into different files I embarked on re-reading it, highlighting related ideas with similar colours of highlighters. After categorising data manually, I brought together all similar ideas by cutting and pasting them together using the computer files. The process helped me to develop themes and sub-themes from the data categories, which I used in the later analysis.

With the data categorised and themes identified, I returned to the questions and objectives I had posed to guide the study, in order to establish the existing relationships between the collected data and the goals of the study. I identified which information corresponded with which questions and which themes emerged relating to the different objectives. I also developed a data matrix to establish what relationships existed between findings from different categories of respondents, and other sources. The findings from the entire process are presented and discussed in chapters four, five, six, seven and eight.

Presentation of data

I have presented data in several ways. I have used tables to present all numerical and some narrative data. In addition, I have used direct quotations within the text to illustrate some key points and text boxes to present some of the views of research participants in their original form to help readers capture not only the ideas but also the tone and mood in which they were expressed. I have used codes (1k-1 to 3k-60) to represent individual farmers I interviewed, and (EXT) to represent the different extension workers who formed the bulk of the research/implementation team. 1k represents respondents from Kibiriizi parish, 2k respondents from Kiteme parish, and 3k respondents from Musaaale.

I have also used the first person reporting (I, and we) for two reasons namely: to ascertain my position as the true author of the thesis, taking responsibility for all the actions and views presented in this research. This is in line with the socially critical view of knowledge as socially constructed, and research as a social process, where by the researcher is not a neutral observer but an integral part of the social processes that lead to generation of knowledge (Popper (1976). Janse van Rensburg (1995), Lather (1991b) and Hall (1985) all writing from a socially critical stance, critiqued the positivist claim of neutrality in research that compels traditional researchers to apply a discourse that disassociates them from their actions. Janse van Rensburg (1995:14) argues:

Over the past decades re-conceptualisations in the arena of science have allowed researchers to recognise that they are not neutral in the sense of having no opinions or feelings about 'their' topics. There is thus little need to purport to such neutrality or disinterest by distancing oneself from ones work as 'the researcher' or 'this writer'.

I concur with the above view by Janse van Rensburg. I find it particularly difficult and almost unrealistic for social researchers to distance themselves from their actions especially when they are viewed as social actors with a social, political and intellectual responsibility for their actions in the generation of knowledge. My decision to use the first person reporting was largely based on the factors discussed above. Secondly, I also deliberately used the pronoun 'we' to indicate that this research was a collaborative endeavour involving a cross-section of actors including myself, VEDCO extension workers and programme officers who constituted the research team (see section 3.7.7).

CHAPTER FOUR
CONTEXTUAL ISSUES RELATED TO ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT IN LUWERO DISTRICT

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based on the second objective of the study, which was to conduct a situational analysis of the community I studied. The purpose was to identify contextual issues related to environment and natural resource management and provide an understanding of the broader context in which the study was conducted. The findings of the situation analysis presented here were derived from several sources including government documents, NGO documents, interviews and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) activities with residents in the parishes of MUSAALE, KITEME and KIBIRIIZI in Luwero district (see fig.1.1). Additional information was also derived from my personal observations and informal discussions with VEDCO staff and farmers. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section briefly describes Luwero district: its geography, political and administrative set up, history, and population. The second discusses the socio-economic situation, the third focuses on the state of the environment and natural resources in the district: the fourth section explores the environmental crisis: the fifth presents a summary of community problems prioritised by the people and section six briefly concludes the chapter.

4.1 LUWERO DISTRICT

The study was conducted in Luwero District (see fig.1.1). The District is along the highway to the north of the country with its headquarters in Luwero town, 64 kilometres to the north of Kampala, the capital. The total area of the district is 5773.53-sq km, of which 42,104 ha is under forest. The district lies at an altitude of 1082m-1372m above sea level (G.o.U 2001). The district has a total road network of 735 km, of which 398 are feeder roads and the rest, the northern highway.

The district has a mean annual rainfall of 1250mm in two distinct rainy seasons (March-June and October-December) and has moderate temperatures ranging from 16° C to 30° C all year round. The northern part is drier than the south and mainly inhabited by cattle keepers, while the south, which is wetter, is predominantly inhabited by agriculturalists.

The district has a population of 479,922, of whom 243,980 are women and 235,942 men. This is a largely rural district with only 8% urban dwellers and 92% rural-based (UBOS, 2002). Although Luwero is part of the original kingdom of Buganda, the district is multi-ethnic. Baganda constitute the majority of the people, although other ethnic groups dominate some of the areas. Bombo town council, where Nubians form the majority, and Ngoma and Wakyato sub-counties, where Banyankole cattle keepers are predominant, are a case in point (VEDCO, 1998).

4.1.1 Political and administrative structure of the district

In the Ugandan political and administrative system, the district is the highest political and administrative unit of local government. Under the existing decentralisation system, districts are semi-autonomous political and administrative units with powers not only to implement government policy, but also to develop and implement local policies to respond to the local conditions on the ground. The set up consists of a two-leg structure representing the administrative and the political arms of the district illustrated in figure 4.1. While both structures have five similar structures at the lower levels, the county and local council 4 respectively are not functional.

A Resident District Commissioner (RDC) represents the central government within the district. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), who is also the top civil servant in the district, heads the administrative arm of the district, while the chairman of the district Local council heads the political arm. All representatives at the different levels of the political structure are elected, unlike those in the administrative set up, who are professional civil servants. Luwero district consists of three counties of Katikamu, Bamunanika and Nakaseke, which are sub-divided into fifteen sub-counties.

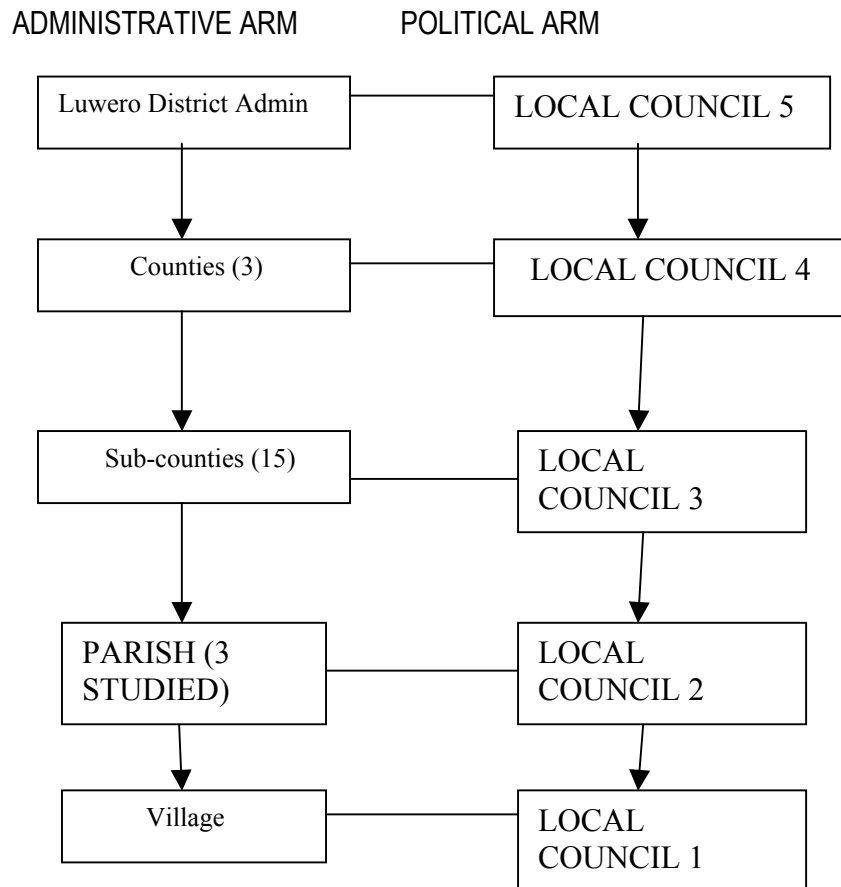


Fig 4.1 District political and administrative structures

4.1.2 A Brief History of Luwero District

Between 1981 and 1986, the district experienced a guerrilla war that lasted for six years and finally brought the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government to power in 1986. The war devastated most of the economic and social infrastructure, killing, maiming or displacing many of the inhabitants. The process of reconstruction and rehabilitation has continued for the last seventeen years, but the district has yet to fully recover from the effects of war. Many people who lost their property have not been able to fully re-establish themselves. The loss in human life still lingers in the minds of many. Luwero is one of the districts with the largest number of orphans and widows, due to the war and of late the AIDS scourge, factors that have increased the social and economic vulnerability of people. The district has, since the war, been a centre of attraction for many international and local charity organisations, which are assisting in its rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

4.2 THE SOCIO ECONOMIC SITUATION

The people in Luwero have traditionally depended on two major economic activities. People in the wetter southern part of the district are predominantly agriculturalists, growing coffee as the main cash crop and a wide range of food crops that are also marketed for cash (VEDCO 2000). Agriculture is a source of livelihood for 85% of the people in the district (VEDCO, 1998). Inhabitants of the drier northern part of the district are mainly cattle keepers. Other economic activities include trade, brewing, charcoal, and brick making (VEDCO 2000).

Although agriculture is mentioned as the main economic activity, the people are largely subsistence farmers. Kyaddondo and Kyomuhendo (1999), in a baseline study that involved 705 households in Katikamu and Bamunanika counties, found that 90% of the households sold crops for income. Coffee, which was for a long time the main cash crop of the district, has of recent suffered from the wilt disease that has badly affected people's actual incomes and the status of coffee as a key source of income in the district (see section 8.2.1.3). Findings of a socio-economic survey and a baseline study conducted by VEDCO in 1998 and 1999 respectively revealed that the economic status of the people was below the official national poverty line of \$1240 per a year. In some of the sub-counties, the annual household incomes were incredibly low, ranging between \$160 and \$ 594 (VEDCO, 1998). The study by Kyaddondo and Kyomuhendo revealed that 6.3% (44) of the 705 households studied could only afford one meal a day, while 31.3% (220) could afford only two meals a day (Kyaddondo and Kyomuhendo, 1999).

4.2.1 Household well-being

Based on the above facts, I decided to explore the economic well-being of the communities in the parishes I studied. I used community wealth ranking; income and expenditure trees; the income expenditure matrices (Chambers, 1997, Mukherjee, 1993 and Wilde, 1997); and observation during home visits. The use of these Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools was meant to generate qualitative views from the people about their well-being and to the communities' own picture of well-being.

The picture generated showed that the people could be categorised into three major well-being categories: the rich, the middle-income earners and the poor, although the last group was in some communities further sub-divided (see appendix 4.1). In all villages, very few people were

categorised as rich. Indicators of wealth included property ownership, ability to meet the socio-economic needs of the family without strain, food security, multiplicity of income sources and stable families. The second category of middle-income earners was larger than rich ones, but still fewer than the poor ones. The middle earners shared many characteristics with the rich group although they were generally less endowed than the rich. For example, they had permanent property like the rich and were able to meet their livelihood needs, but with some strain. The group categorised as poor was larger than the other two (Table 4.1). People in this group could not meet most of the basic needs in life. The majority did not own permanent property like land and houses; they were food insecure, only affording one or two poor meals a day (often carbohydrates like cassava, sweet potatoes, or yams with no other essential nutrients). They did not have much to sell apart from the little food that they produced, and did not have the capacity to make use of the resources like land that some of them had. Although primary education was free, some of the children of the poor were out of school because parents could not buy pens and exercise books or did not have food to pack for the children's lunch at school. The poor could not even borrow from the available the micro-finance institutions because they lacked the basic securities required and also the confidence to borrow (see sections 8.7.1 and 8.8.5). The poor consisted of widows, the elderly, sick, alcoholics and young people, some of whom were largely landless.

Table (4.1) showing household well-being in different villages

Village	Group 1: Rich	Group 2: Middle	Group 3: Poor	Total
Nsawo (Mus)	10	36	44	90
Ggembe (Mus)	8	38	42	88
Kasolo (Kit)	9	42	46	97
Malungu (Kit)	12	36	45	93
Kibirizi (Kib)	12	34	38	84
Kisanga(Kib)	9	38	43	90

Source: Well-being analysis generated by the communities during PRA

It was difficult to establish the actual cash incomes for the households, even through an income and expenditure analysis. The income and expenditure analysis showed that poor people spent much more than they earned, unlike the economically better off households as the two cases in tables 4.2 and 4.3 illustrate. (Note that one US dollar equals about 1500 Ugandan shillings).

Table (4.2) Sample of an income and expenditure matrix for three months for a poor, female-headed household in Ggembe village, consisting of one adult and five school-going children

Source of income	Amount in shillings	Expenditure items	Amount in shillings
Casual labour	60,000	Sugar	20,000
Sale of vegetables	2,000	Paraffin	9,600
Donations	60,000	Salt	3,600
		Soap	9,600
		Maize flour	18,000
		Medical Care	12,000
		Transport	20,000
		School requirements	66,000
Total	122,000		158,800

Source: Household income and expenditure analysis with individual farmer

Table (4.3) Sample of an income and expenditure matrix for three months for a middle-income female-headed household in Kakakala village

Source of income	Amount in shillings	Expenditure items	Amount in shillings
Distilling Alcohol (Waragi)	210,000	School fees and school requirements	50,000
Sale of vegetables	36,000	Medical bills	15,600
Sale of sweet potatoes	36,000	Domestic expense	107,600
Sale of Jack Fruit	24,000	Transport	15,000
Sale of coffee	42,000	Casual labour	21,000
Total Income	348,000	Total Expenditure	209,200
Balance	138,800		

Source: Household income and expenditure analysis with individual farmer

The disparity between incomes and expenditures among the poor showed that people had multiple survival strategies, some of which they were reluctant to reveal. Using semi-structured interviews with individual farmers, I discovered that a number of survival strategies and sources of income had not been mentioned during the wealth ranking exercise. A number of female headed households were involved in brewing; distilling and selling local beer and alcohol (waragi) from which they generated additional income. There was also much borrowing from within the community. People not only borrowed cash but also essential commodities like salt, sugar, soap and paraffin from friends, relatives and shops. There were also people who were continually assisted by others in the community for basic items, including food. This was the case with some elderly and sick people who had no relatives to support them. Elderly people were also receiving support from working relatives in towns. Such strategies had not been

mentioned during the wealth ranking and the income and expenditure analysis. This was an important finding in two ways: it opened our eyes to the complex nature of community dynamics and also the importance of triangulating research methods and techniques. These findings also suggest some sense of communal spirit among some groups.

4.2.2 Poverty and the land situation

Through interviews, community resource mapping and focus group discussions (Mukherjee, 1993, Wilde, 1997) with farmers, land was identified as the most important natural resource mentioned by a range of communities. The findings also revealed that: a) many households did not have sufficient land for agriculture; b) there was inequitable access to and control over land; and c) there were complex dynamics surrounding access to and control of land, which aggravated poverty and poor management of land.

Table (4.4) Size of land available to households for Agriculture

N=60			
Land size	Bamunanika county	Katikamu county	Total
< 3acres	11	8	19
3-5 acres	9	9	18
6-10 acres	10	7	17
> 10 acres	0	6	6
Total	30	30	60
<i>Source: Semi-structured interview with farmers</i>			

These findings were reflection of earlier ones from studies by Kyaddondo & Kyomuhendo (1999) and an evaluation by VEDCO (1998), which revealed that households had access to an average of 2 to 5 acres. The local average of about 5 acres compares well with the national average (land holding per capita) reported at about 5 acres (MAAIF & MFPED 2000, NEMA 1998), which might imply that issues related to the small size of farms would probably be applicable to the rest of the country.

4.2.3 Access to land

We identified five different ways of access and control over land as illustrated in the (Table 4.5).

Table (4.5) Land ownership patterns/status derived from farmers' interviews

N=60

Land size	Owned Personally	Hired	Borrowed	Caretaker	Tenant
< 3acres	6	4	5	4	10
3-5 acres	3	3	6	4	9
6-10 acres	6	0	2	2	10
> 10 acres	1	0	0		
Total	16	7	13	10	29

Source: Farmers' interviews (Adds up to more than 60 due to multiple responses)

The interviews I conducted revealed that while the numbers of those who owned land privately were sizeable, only a small fraction of them had personally bought the land. Of the sixteen (16) private personal landowners, only five had bought the land, the remaining eleven (11) were descendants of mailo⁸ landowners, or heirs to those who had bought from mailo landowners. In many instances those who owned land privately appeared more economically stable.

Some people could only access land for agriculture by borrowing and hiring from those with bigger acreage. Borrowing and hiring was however on a more temporary basis often covering a farming season. There were incidences where some land borrowers had been allowed to use the land for periods as long as ten years. Interesting about this informal arrangement was that no written contracts or agreements were given to borrowers. User rights under such circumstances could not be passed on to any other person, and those who borrowed land were restricted from using it for any permanent or semi- permanent investment. This meant that they could only plant seasonal food crops like tubers and green vegetables.

Although this was seen as a positive coping strategy by some farmers, others mentioned two major problems associated with it. Landowners were accused of only lending out those patches of land they had failed to farm either because the soils were poor, compacted by livestock or under mature bush that the owners had failed to clear. Landowners were also

⁸ In the 1900 Buganda agreement, 1000 reigning chiefs were given big tracts of land often in terms of square miles (hence the term mailo) as appreciation for their collaboration with the British colonialists. The particular individual and his family held land acquired in this way in perpetuity until that person sold it or the lineage to inherit the land became extinct.

accused of sometimes demanding the land back the moment borrowers had improved it. Not bound by any legal or moral obligation to the borrowers, landowners often ended the deal in a mere three-word sentence: “olulima olujja tolima” (*meaning: next season don’t farm*). One interviewee summarised the plight of the landless thus:

Many of us do not have sufficient land to use for agriculture and if you decide to hire land from some landowners, they often demand that you either pay cash or dig 1 acre for him before he gives you 1 acre, but this is demanded at a time when people should be preparing land to catch the planting season. If you do it, you may never catch the season yourself. At times when they give the land they give those very difficult portions that they have failed to cultivate themselves and as soon as they see it improved they tell you next season they need that land for their own use. Others demand that you share the products equally.

Landless people with some money preferred to pay cash for land as it gave them definite rights to use it for a specific period of time. In this arrangement, individuals rented land for an agreed period of time, ranging from one farming season to a period of up to between two and three years.

Tenants in this case were people who were legally granted land by the rightful landowners. Evidence showed that many of the tenants had occupied the land for many years; others were heirs of the original tenants and could not even remember how long their families had been on that land. In the tenancy arrangement, landowners used to charge an annual user fee from the tenants. The fee sealed their rights as legal occupants and users of land until 1975 when the fee was abolished in a land decree instituted by the military government of the time. Current tenants were not paying any fee apart from those occupying Kabaka’s land in Bamunanika. The abolition of the fee created another form of insecurity for tenants. They no longer have any legal backing to protect them while at the same time, the landowners are equally helpless as they neither benefit financially from the land nor can sell it without provoking resistance from the occupants. In many cases, interviewees directly related their poverty and food insecurity to the limited amount of land they could access for production.

4.2.4 Gender and access to land

While women constituted 45% (27) of the farmers I interviewed and whose farms I visited frequently, only six of the 27 were living as independent heads of households. The rest were either wives or relatives of the male owners of the land. I realised that women’s access to land (i.e. having the right to use land freely) largely depended on them being members of a family, either as wives or relatives.

I came across three interesting cases exemplifying gender issues related to control and access to land. One female key informant, a Programme manager with VEDCO, reported two of the cases. In both cases, after realising that the women were proving innovative and generating some personal income from farming the land, husbands refused them the use of the land, except for household food production. One of the women, a second wife, chose to hire land to avoid domestic conflicts, but was jilted by the husband, who felt disobeyed and threatened by the woman's move. In the second case, another second wife was divorced for the same reason. In the third and more unique case, one of the male lead farmers was a victim; relatives of his wife destroyed their property and evicted them from the land because they had settled on land that belonged to the woman's family. The woman's relatives saw the presence of a 'strange' man on the family land as a violation of their culture and a potential threat to the security of ancestral property and deeply entrenched patriarchal relations.

All people who occupied land as caretakers (Table 4.5), were women. I called them caretakers for lack of a better word to describe their situation. Caretakers were people who had been authorised by legitimate landowners to look after their land on their behalf. Two of these women occupied land belonging to their male relatives. The remaining eight were widows whom I personally thought qualified as the true owners of the land after the death of their husbands. Surprisingly, none of them declared ownership in their discourse when responding to the question as to who owned the land where they lived and farmed. They all responded in almost the same way: "the land belongs to my late husband" or "the land belonged to my late husband". This was in comparison with other responses like "the land is mine", "the land belongs to my husband" and "the land is ours". The widows' responses were surprising for, apart from raising the issue of 'ownership in death' where the dead are still believed to have ownership rights, it endorses the role of patriarchy in defining property control and ownership. All these examples revealed gender related insecurity regarding land.

I also observed situations in households indicating some limitations to land access on the part of women. This was closely related to the gender roles within households, whereby women were regarded as responsible for feeding the family and men as the providers for the financial needs of the family. This meant that land had to be apportioned according to the two household needs, in which case the women had access to land earmarked for food production for domestic use. This did not mean that women were only engaged in food production. They

participated fully in the money generating activities, but the main decisions on how to use such land were not theirs. I witnessed a case in Busambu village in Bamunanika County that illustrated this phenomenon. The husband allowed VEDCO to establish a community demonstration garden on their land, without the consent of the wife. When the garden was established the woman planted cassava between the coffee and banana lines, which was a discouraged agronomical practice. She saw the refusal to intercrop cassava as wastage of space and energy, since she was the one who did most of the weeding. The husband forcefully removed the cassava plants and in return the woman vowed never into step in that garden “if its establishment was intended to starve her children”. This was a good example of tension between cash cropping and farming for food security – and ironic that VEDCO was supporting the former to the detriment of the latter, from the wife’s point of view. The political, economic, historical and social issues discussed above were found to have had strong effects on the environmental situation not only the in counties studied, but also in the entire district.

4.3 THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

This section presents findings about the environmental situation in the Katikamu and Bamunanika counties. The findings were generated using PRA methods, particularly resource maps, transect walks, ranking techniques and interviews and observations (Wilde 1997). Seven major environmental problems were identified, namely: land degradation, deforestation, wetland mismanagement, weather and climatic changes, increased pests, vermin and crop diseases and water scarcity.

4.3.1 Land degradation

Land degradation was cited as the most serious environmental problem experienced across the two counties. Of the sixty farmers I interviewed and followed up in their homes, the majority commented that their land was either declining in fertility or already degraded (Table 4.6)

Table (4.6) Responses to the question “what is the state of the land you use for agriculture”?

(n=60)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Still fertile	24	40%
Declining in fertility	17	28%
Already degraded	19	32%
Total	60	100%

Source: Interview with individual farmers

The findings of the study by Kyaddondo and Kyomuhendo (1999) also showed that at least 23% of the farmers from a sample of 704 raised the issue of soil infertility as a major hindrance to increased agricultural productivity.

I used the sustained probing technique with the “But why?” question (Hope, 1984) to establish people’s perception of the cause of environmental problems (see table 4.7). Although the question focused mainly on the causes of land degradation, the outcome represents a cross-section of issues that are applicable to a broad spectrum of environmental problems. It also demonstrates the macro and micro nature of environmental problems and their causes. We can see the economic dimension of soil degradation as reflected in poverty and the desire to meet basic needs; land degradation is also shown to be caused by people’s lack of knowledge, skills and technical support to respond appropriately; the summary exposes the political/administrative dimension of the problem in the form of poor supervision of government extension workers and lack of staff motivation. The findings also illustrate the relationship between local, national and global socio-economic factors in exacerbating environmental problems at a local level.

Table (4.7) Causes of land degradation as perceived by farmers (n=60)

Main cause	Why? I	Why? II	Why? III
-Over-use of land	-The land is small	-Cannot afford to expand.	-It is expensive and I have no money
Soil erosion	-Poor tillage practices	-Lack of skills in sustainable agriculture, -Laziness, -Lack of money to pay labour	-Limited extension support,
Deforestation	-Commercial and domestic fuel wood exploitation, -Commercial charcoal making, -Farm establishment	-Limited economic alternatives -Lack of alternative energy sources -Poverty	-No skills and knowledge -Electricity, gas and paraffin are more expensive than wood fuel -No employment
Poor soil conservation practices (no fallow, crop rotation, mulching, water conservation, agroforestry)	-Limited knowledge and skills, -Land shortage, -Laziness, termites eat the mulch -Costly labour	-Inactive government extension workers, -Inherited family land -Lack of exposure - Few migrant labourers	-Lack of motivation -Lack of supervision, -Lack of money to buy more land - Inability to pay labourers
Poverty	-Decline of income from coffee, -Decline in coffee production, -Unreliable markets for agricultural products like okra, chillies, hot pepper and other horticultural products.	- Unstable markets, -Attack by the coffee wilt -Exploitation by middle buyers who pay less than the market price -Some are not eaten locally, -Difficulty in meeting international quality standards (much of produce is left as waste)	-The government stopped fixing the minimum price, -Farmers' co-operatives collapsed, -Non-indigenous crops not needed on local market -Strict management and production procedures have to be followed including use of specific chemicals.

Source: this table represents composite answers from semi structured interviews with different farmers

4.3.2 Deforestation

The community ranked forests and forest resources as the third most important set of natural resources. Forest resources included fuel-wood, charcoal, timber, building materials and medicinal plants. The value attached to forests turned them into a direct target for exploitation

by both commercial and non-commercial users of the resource, which resulted in deforestation. Youth in particular saw forests as a ready source of cash. Several respondents decried the reckless exploitation of forests. A female farmer in Kyotamugavu directly associated the increasing rate of soil erosion with deforestation by the youth. Another farmer in Ng'anjo village raised a very similar concern about deforestation caused by charcoal making thus:

There is too much charcoal burning in this village, can you imagine the forest next to Edward's land used to cover a very long and wide stretch of land, but they have cut it, it is no longer there, all you see are stumps and useless branches. When you get close you will be surprised there is nothing, it is not a forest any more; when you stand on one side you can see what is happening on the other side of what used to be a forest.

In addition to charcoal burning, people cut trees to sell commercially as fuel wood in towns and for the baking of clay bricks for the construction market. Although the local people were involved in the actual cutting of trees, it was often richer urban dwellers dealing in such products that financed locals and sustained the activities. Deforestation was thus more than a local problem; it could also be linked to the national energy crisis described by NEMA (2000), whereby the majority of Ugandans in urban areas depend on charcoal as a main source of energy for domestic use.

4.3.3 Wetland mismanagement

The community members participating in the PRA ranked wetlands and water as the third most important set of natural resources. In addition to the provision of water for domestic use, wetlands were used for fish farming, providing clay for brick making, sand for building and construction, and a variety of herbs for medicinal purposes. Wetlands were also used to grow food crops, especially yams and vegetables, during the dry season. Unfortunately, this action created a chain of problems as revealed during my interaction with the farmers. Productive farming in a wetland was only possible after draining all the unnecessary water. This practice turned parts of the original wetlands into dry land in some of the areas in Musaale and Kibiriizi parishes. The high degree of bio-diversity associated with wetlands was also threatened by several ecologically destructive practices. Farmers referred to three such practices namely:

- a) the slash and burn method of clearing the land for agriculture,
- b) use of agro-chemicals to control pests and crop diseases on vulnerable vegetables and
- c) direct, uncontrolled burning of wetland vegetation to avoid labour costs involved in bush clearing. These were common practices by farmers living near wetlands and farming within them.

4.3.4 Weather and climatic changes

Individuals and groups mentioned unpredictable weather and unfavourable climatic changes during the PRA as some of the existing environmental problems in the community. Participants complained that due to changes in climatic conditions they were getting rain and sunshine at the wrong times, which they saw as a major obstacle to farming. Farmers' traditional knowledge of seasons had been rendered useless by these changes. Farmers associated unpredictable changes in weather and climatic conditions with deforestation, draining of wetlands, lack of money and witchcraft. The issue of witchcraft as a cause for weather changes was unique in that it was raised by all groups, but only during problem tree analysis. Brick makers were accused of using rainmakers to stop rainfall until their bricks had dried and been transported from the paths which becomes impassable after rain. This constituted a major tension between those making a more 'traditional' living off the land from agriculture, and those 'new' practices such as brick-making that were in reality competing. The latter often had indirect and hard-to-prove environmental impacts through activities such as deforestation for fuel wood used to fire the brick kilns.

4.3.5 Vermin, pests and diseases

Different information sources revealed the above three as outstanding problems hindering agricultural production and productivity. Farmers mentioned vermin, especially monkeys and wild pigs, as the key destructive elements to people's crops in the area, which they attributed to two major causes. During the 1981-1986 war, the army drove people out of their villages, which led to a phenomenal multiplication of monkeys and wild pigs, while at the same time the domestic pigs also turned wild and could not be re-tamed after the war. Governmental control mechanisms were reportedly poor or absent, evident in the recurrent claim by participants that they had not seen any vermin control personnel from the game department in the last ten years.

Pests and diseases proved another major problem to crops. There was no village where they were not mentioned. Pests included: banana weevils, maize and coffee borers, caterpillars, cutworms, moths, aphids, nematodes and mealy bugs. Coffee wilt, cassava mosaic, tomato wilt, tomato and potato blights were the main crop diseases mentioned, and which I also observed myself. The prevalence of pests and diseases was often explained in terms of lack of money to buy the recommended pesticides, and limited knowledge of and skills in cultural control methods. Farmers and extension workers both acknowledged the limitations of cultural

and biological pest control methods. Farmers complained that cultural control materials and methods only repelled but did not destroy the pests, as they would prefer. This presented another paradox of sustainable agriculture, for while this may be the more ecologically-sound way to manage pests rather than to try and eradicate them, but it appeared very difficult to convince desperate farmers to use these methods instead of the pesticides they were used to. According to farmers and extension workers, there was no evidence of any cultural and biological control method for any of the crop diseases. This meant that farmers had to continue using agro-chemical, which are unfortunately palliative and in the long run more ecologically destructive, besides being costly to poor farmers.

4.4 MANIFESTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

All the environmental problems discussed above pointed to an ongoing environmental crisis which compelled me to engage farmers individually, in in-depth discussions to establish the environmental situation in their local areas. In response, they described what I saw as a vivid manifestation of a major environmental crisis. Their descriptions often emphasised what appeared as the causes of this crisis. Table (4.8) presents these responses in their original form. Responses showed a clear trend in the interpretation of the crisis, with some seeing it in terms of land productivity, another group in terms of resource depletion and the third in terms of weather changes, as I have categorised them in Table 4.8. The findings in Table 4.8 summarise the different dimensions of the environmental crisis in the villages studied. It also points to some of key causes and agents of environmental degradation. Further implications of this crisis are discussed in section 9.1.4.

Table (4.8) Farmers' perspectives on the environmental situation in their villages (n=60)

State of land/productivity	Resource depletion/crisis	Weather/climatic changes
<p>- Land has deteriorated due to soil erosion and over farming (note that over-farming leads to soil erosion so these are not two, but one problem leading to another)</p> <p>- Those of us on the upper side of the village have a problem with soil erosion while our friends on the lower part have enough fertility.</p> <p>- Land is becoming poorer and poorer, crops like bananas do not last for more than a year, all crops struggle to survive in these soils. Cassava gets stunted, bananas yield stunted bunches, and even some water springs have dried out.</p> <p>- Environmental degradation in Kibiriizi is getting worse people used to grow and eat bananas here, but these days the yields are very poor.</p> <p>-The size of bananas has become smaller and smaller and yields for all crops are getting poorer and poorer.</p> <p>-Most of the land needs fertilisers. You cannot rely on its natural fertility the way we used to do in the past.</p>	<p>-There is no more free land (unused) in this village because people have farmed it.</p> <p>- We used to have forests, which provided wood, but people are living on that land now. Now we have to use the coffee that has been damaged by the wilt. When the dried coffee is finished there will be a crisis for fuel wood in this area. Where there were forests, there are now farms and gardens or grassland. (Settlement – population pressure)</p> <p>- All the land is old. We are no longer able to have access to virgin land.</p> <p>-Springs have dried and older people are telling us it is due to the sinking of many boreholes.</p> <p>- Land uphill has become dry and barren because the youth have cut down all the trees and made charcoal and currently even if they wanted to make charcoal they would not be able to do it as there are no more trees they can use. That is why they spend the little money they have gambling to "generate more money"</p>	<p>-These days the seasons have changed so much; you cannot rely on our old knowledge of seasons. If you make such a mistake you will regret it. You can prepare your garden to plant, but rain never comes at the right time.</p> <p>-We have had many problems with the seasons. In 1997 it rained so much that many people lost their crops because of the rain; now it is the reverse. The rains come too late, too early or too little. Last year it was only those who planted early that were able to get any yields, those who waited for the normal season never got anything.</p> <p>- When we were growing up some years ago, if it did not rain before 11.00 am, then you would know it would not rain at all, but these days rain is very unpredictable. it can come any time of the day and such rain is bad because it comes with a lot of wind and at times hailstorms, which are very destructive to crops.</p> <p>-A number of farmers particularly during PRA sessions referred to weather changes as indicators of environmental degradation.</p>

Source: this is a summary of ideas from semi-structured interviews with farmers

4.5 PRIORITY PROBLEMS OF FIVE DIFFERENT VILLAGES

The situation analysis ended with a ranking exercise to establish the five most serious problems in each community. The ranking was done in mixed groups of men and women, selected by the participants in the community meetings in separate villages. The findings are presented in the tables (4.9 to 4.13). Although we had wanted to rank only the top five problems, participants in some villages ranked more than five problems because, according to them, not being among the top five did not mean that the problems were not significant.

Table (4.9) Problem ranking for Ggembe village (Katikamu county) (n=6)

Problems	Personal/individual rankings						Score	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F		
Soil degradation	2	4	4	3	3	2	18	1
Lack of money	2	0	2	5	2	0	11	2
Weather changes	2	0	2	0	1	5	10	3
Limited technical knowledge of agriculture	3	0	2	2	2	0	9	4
Poor marketing of produce	1	2	0	0	1	3	7	5
Limited land for agriculture	0	4	0	0	1	0	5	6

Source: Community priority ranking in Ggembe village

Table (4.12) Problem Ranking for Nsawo village (Katikamu County) (n=9)

Problems	Personal/individual rankings									Score	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I		
Scarcity of money	4	4	3	3	2	2	4	3	2	27	1
Unpredictable markets	3	2	0	4	3	2	3	4	1	22	2
Degraded soils	2	3	3	1	3	0	4	2	1	19	3
Pests and diseases	4	2	1	1	2	2	0	3	3	18	4
Shortage of land	2	2	3	1	0	0	2	2	3	15	5
Limited skills in agriculture	2	3	2	0	0	3	0	1	1	12	6

Source: Community priority ranking in Nsawo village

Table (4.10) Problem Ranking for Malungu village (Bamunanika county) (n=8)

Problems	Individual/personal rankings								Score	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H		
Poverty	3	2	4	3	4	3	2	2	25	1
Poor agriculture markets	3	4	2	2	3	2	2	3	23	2
Decline of soil fertility	2	3	0	4	2	0	5	3	19	3
Pests and diseases	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	19	3
Weather unpredictability	2	3	0	2	2	3	2	1	15	4
Shortage of land	0	0	2	1	3	3	0	0	1	5

Source: Community priority ranking in Malungu village

Table (4.11) Problem ranking for Kibiriizi village (Bamunanika county) (n=8)

Problems	Individual/personal rankings								Score	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H		
Vermin, pests & diseases	3	3	4	5	2	3	2	4	26	1
Poor soils/degraded	3	2	3	3	3	4	1	2	21	2
Lack of money	2	4	4	1	2	2	1	2	18	3
Lack of labour	3	2	1	3	1	2	2	1	15	4
Limited access to land	2	3	1	2	0	0	4	1	13	5
Lack of agricultural implements	2	4	0	2	0	2	0	0	10	6
Lack of extension support	0	0	2	2	3	0	1	1	9	7

Source: Community priority ranking in Kibiriizi village

Table (4.13) Problem ranking for Nkuluze village (Bamunanika county) (n=9)

Problems	Individual participant rankings									Score	Rank	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I			
Participants												
Pests and crop diseases	3	5	2	4	2	2	2	2	1	23	1	
Agricultural implements	2	3	4	2	3	4	3	0	0	21	2	
Poverty	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	2	18	3	
Soil infertility	2	4	0	3	2	2	2	0	1	16	4	
Seasonal changes	4	2	2	0	1	1	0	2	3	15	5	
Costly labour	0	0	1	2	2	1	2	3	3	14	6	

Source: Community priority ranking in Nkuluze village

The above findings are important in that they summarise community problems, not only as perceived, but also prioritised by the people themselves. Findings also show that the problems in the different villages are similar. They reflect the socio-economic, political and ecological context of the environmental crisis.

Through the eyes of the respondents in this study, on the one hand, the politics, including the war, and the inefficiency reflected in the slow development and implementation of land related policies, the failure to control vermin, poor support for government extension workers and lack of effective supervision, influenced the economy and exacerbated the pressure on natural resources. On the other hand, other factors like gender issues, limited scope for the youth, the pursuit of economic gains, and absence of viable economic alternatives for the poor and unfavourable local and international economic conditions were also major causes of environmental problems, which in turn created new socio-economic and ecological problems (see tables 4.7 and 4.8). Complex relations are evident, in which social traditions and systems such as patriarchy, population growth, political developments such as the war, economic and bio-physical factors, all play a role in natural resource management or the lack thereof. The,

multi-faceted nature of 'the environmental crisis' has been described by Ekins (1993) on a global scale.

Concluding comments

This chapter has tried to paint the complex picture representing the key realities of the social, economic, political and ecological situation of Luwero district, where I did the study. The findings show the interrelationship between the history of the district and the people, the socio-economic and political situation and the multi-dimensional nature of the environmental crisis, which I have also described. It was this complex network of social, economic and ecological problems that VEDCO, the NGO I worked with during my research, set out to address through a programme that I describe in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DESCRIPTION OF VEDCO THE ORGANISATION AND ITS PROGRAMME

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe VEDCO, the organisation, its history and the motivation for its community-based development activities. The chapter also gives an overview of VEDCO's sustainable agriculture and food security programme. It provides a brief background to the programme and outlines its main features. It also highlights the relationship between VEDCO's programme and the national environmental policy of Uganda.

5.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF VEDCO

University students originating from Luwero district founded VEDCO in 1986 as an association that would bring together students whose parents had been cut off in the 'Luwero Triangle'⁹, an active war zone, during the guerrilla war that brought the NRM government to power. The aim was to trace the whereabouts of family members. After the war, VEDCO took on a new role in response to the challenges of poverty, displacement and devastation resulting from the war situation. The association initially operated as a self-help organisation, working with other relief organisations in the district to distribute aid to the returnees (VEDCO 2000).

In 1989-90, VEDCO changed from distributing relief to fostering self-reliant development, concentrating on changing people's attitudes from those of receivers of relief to creators of wealth (VEDCO 1999). This was after the potential challenges likely to emerge from the dependency on relief that characterised the post-war period had been appreciated. Minimal efforts had been made by government and charitable organisations to assist the local people to re-establish themselves and chart a more self-reliant path into the future. VEDCO struggled to initiate community-based development activities between 1989 and 1992, with limited success, due to lack of resources and the absence of a concrete organisational structure. The organisation was still run on a voluntary basis at that time, with no organisational structure or full-time staff. In 1992, however, the organisation became more organised after an inflow of

⁹ 'Luwero triangle' is a term that was coined to refer to the central districts of Uganda where the National Resistance Army based its guerrilla war against the Milton Obote UPC government between 1981 and 1986. The name Luwero was used because the struggle began in Luwero district before spreading to other areas to form the so-called triangle. The triangle consisted of the districts of: Luwero, Mpigi and Mubende/Kiboga.

initial funding. Between 1996 and 1999, VEDCO ran an integrated people-centred agricultural improvement programme, aimed at creating a sustainable increase in income generation for 1000 smallholder farmers. The programme specifically emphasised the principles of Low external input sustainable agriculture¹⁰ (LEISA).

5.2 VEDCO'S VISION, MISSION AND STRUCTURE

The organisation's vision is stated as:

Improved quality of life for small-holder farmers and entrepreneurs through sustainable economic empowerment demonstrable in the communities' sustainable utilisation of available resources, ability to negotiate for support services in the areas of food security, marketing, and increase in household incomes (people should be empowered to independently mobilise and utilise resources and services to meet their needs in life) (VEDCO 1999).

Its mission is declared to be:

To ensure sustainable economic empowerment of small-holder farmers and rural entrepreneurs through capacity building in sustainable agriculture, micro-financing and agri-business development with the ultimate aim of developing a community of economically empowered small-holder farmers, market-oriented producers and micro-entrepreneurs (VEDCO 1999).

Both the vision and mission statements were refined by VEDCO staff in a review workshop to say exactly what they felt reflected the true intentions of the programme (Section 7.1.2.1 and 7.1.2.2).

The organisation's main agenda was thus to achieve sustainable economic empowerment among its partners through the promotion of sustainable agriculture, food security, trade and marketing of agricultural produce. This was to be effected through an intensive capacity building programme in the form of education and training. To achieve this goal, the organisation structured itself into four departments namely:

¹⁰ Reijntjee *et al.* (1992) describe LEISA as a farming practice that seeks to optimise the use of locally available resources by maintaining the synergetic effects of different components of the farming system: plants, animals, soil, water, climate and people. External inputs are only used to provide deficient elements in the ecosystem and to enhance available biophysical and human resources. LEISA aims at stable and long-lasting production levels and site-specific farming developed within each ecological and socio-economic system. It incorporates the best components of local farmers' knowledge and practices, ecological agriculture developed elsewhere and conventional scientific knowledge.

- a) Sustainable agriculture and food security,
- b) Agri-business and marketing,
- c) Rural Credit and finance and
- d) Capacity building.

The goals of sustainable agriculture and food security were largely social, deeply concerned with household food security. Agri-business and rural credit and finance, on the other hand, had an obvious commercial orientation, aimed at profit generation. Capacity building was a service department providing the necessary technical and professional support for the other three. It is must be pointed out that the stated differences in goals between departments, negligible as they may seem on the surface, were the seeds of future tensions and contradictions, as will be demonstrated in later chapters.

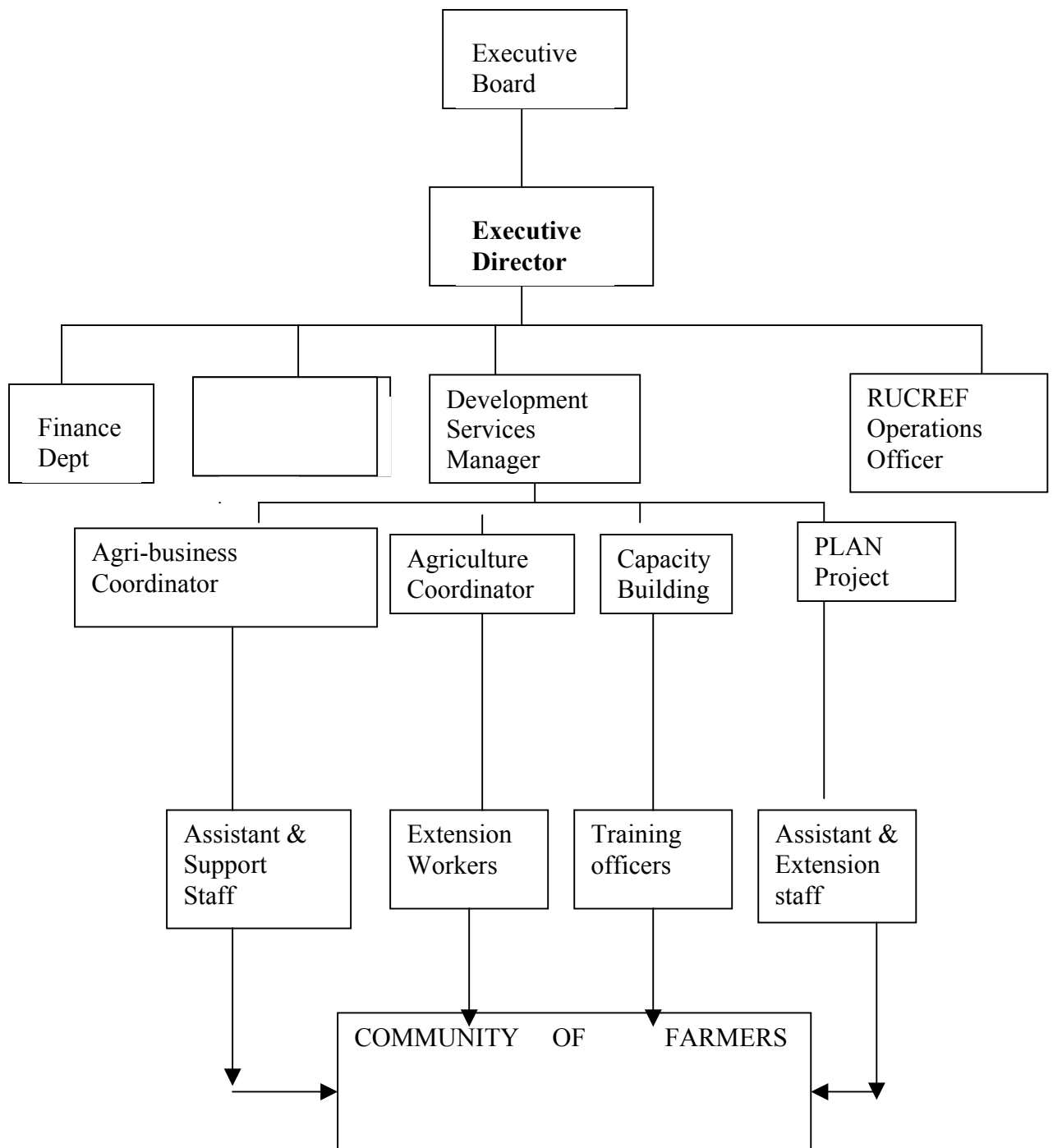


Figure 5.1 VEDCO structure organogram

The structure as presented demonstrated a bureaucratic organisational arrangement (Hope *et al* 1984). This was a rigid structure, which limited the application of participatory programme implementation.

The communication was largely one-way, from the top to the lower levels. The bureaucratic tendency was exacerbated by the fact that the NGO was most of the time working under pressure to meet donor targets (see section 7.2.4.2).

5.3 FUNDING VEDCO PROGRAMMES

As explained in section (5.1), VEDCO started as a voluntary non-profit-making organisation, although this role is slowly but steadily giving way to that of a more commercially oriented organisation. Due to this history, VEDCO has had to depend almost entirely on donations and grants from International development agencies. At the time of this study, VEDCO was receiving funding from as many as six donors, each, funding a different programme activity. This situation was not in any way a source of abundance, but a survival strategy. All the donors were foreign, and ironically, while VEDCO's activities directly addressed several national policies and development goals, the only support from government came in the form of goodwill and moral support from both the central and local district governments. This lack of direct government involvement created an operational gap with the NGO acting without the necessary support and guidance on policy issues. The sources of funding and the dynamics around the process had both positive and negative effects on the organisation's operations, agenda and relationship with the communities, as later discussion will show.

5.4 BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

VEDCO has spent the seventeen years of its existence trying to respond to problems affecting rural people in its areas of operation. Between 1998 and 2000, VEDCO engaged consultants to conduct two baseline studies, one being evaluation and the other internal review (see DC 01, DC 02, DC 03 and DC 04 in Table 3.1) aimed at getting to know issues affecting the local communities more closely so as to design appropriate programmes to address those issues.

5.4.1 The 'participatory' baseline and evaluation studies

In the 1998 baseline study, the major aim was to establish what the community perception of poverty was, the food situation at household level, income generation and household monetary needs (VEDCO 1998). The 2000 study was a collaborative effort between VEDCO and PLAN International, an international organisation supporting children's welfare. In this study, the two organisations were trying to establish the social and economic situation of the people living in

Luwero district, so as to jointly design and implement appropriate responses to the identified problems and challenges. Consultants were engaged to execute the studies.

Both studies sought to identify those issues limiting people's capacity¹¹ to overcome poverty and its related effects. The studies discovered that communities lacked appropriate knowledge and skills in business management, agricultural production and marketing, and access to micro-finance and credit facilities. It was also discovered that land was unevenly distributed and controlled, and mismanaged through poor farming methods. There was evidence of crop destruction caused by vermin, pests and diseases and limited access to quality seeds. A large number of households (45%) experienced a food deficit for at least three months every year (Kyaddondo & Kyomuhendo 2000). Other findings included lack of diversification with most of the households depending on agriculture as a source of income (this however became questionable later when we discovered that the people had several other sources of income not mentioned during the survey (section 4.2.1), declining agricultural production due to land degradation, lack of access to extension services and unreliable markets for agricultural products (VEDCO 1998, VEDCO 2000).

5.4.2 The Emerging Programme

Based on the needs and problems identified, VEDCO developed what they saw as a 'community-based' programme to respond to these challenges. The programme was aimed at addressing problems of food security, natural resource management, income generation through sustainable agriculture and capacity building in the marketing of agricultural products. It should be noted that the participatory nature of this study was suspect. According to the information I got from VEDCO staff who participated, it was a case of using participatory techniques to extract data from the community rather than engaging in purposeful participatory endeavours leading to participant empowerment (Chambers 1997). The processes that followed revealed more gaps associated with the nature of participation, for instance the designing of the response was carried out by the VEDCO executive and a hired consultant, without involving even the field workers and programme officers, who were to finally implement the programme. The dissemination of the baseline findings was also selectively done, often

¹¹ Poverty is an major national problem in Uganda and a key policy concern towards which several major government interventions have been directed in the last decade. The country's major strategy for rural development for the current decade is specifically designed to address rural poverty through the 'modernisation of agriculture. VEDCO's concern for and focus on poverty alleviation through agriculture is directly linked to the national policy framework.

involving local councillors, administrators and influential individuals in the community, some of whom had not participated in the study.

5.4.2.1 Programme objectives

There were five programme objectives in all, but I have selected the four with direct relevance to my study.

1. To enhance the capacity of households of smallholder subsistence farmers to improve food security management and household income levels. This was to be achieved through participatory training in sustainable agriculture, sustainable land use, food security management, rehabilitation of coffee fields and increased participation of women and men in food production.
2. To promote socio-economic empowerment of smallholder farmers through farmer participation in the development and implementation of programmes for income diversification, introduction of alternative income generating activities and the introduction of fair terms of trade between smallholder farmers and crop buyers.
3. To strengthen the institutional capacity of VEDCO to provide demand-driven services to smallholders in areas of food security management, farm business development and access to micro-finance, by strengthening VEDCO's management and administration systems, the establishment of a resource centre for agri-business development, the introduction of the best practices in rural finance and related policies and facilitating small holders dialogue with policy makers.
4. To consolidate collaborative ventures with other NGOs in areas of food security management, production, sustainable land use, women's economic empowerment and lobbying of local councils.

The programme had three major components and eight sub-components. 'Sustainable agriculture (SA) and food security', 'Farm enterprise support' and 'Savings and credit' constituted the major components. Each of the three was further broken down into several of sub-components.

Sustainable agriculture and food security was divided into:

- Practical agricultural training,
- Follow-up technical support

Farm enterprise support had four sub-components:

- Farm business education
- Specialised training in field management of tradable crops
- Training lead farmers
- Access to high quality seeds/seedlings and market information services

Savings and credit on its part was composed of:

- Group management and savings education
- Access to credit

Apart from the studies reported in section 5.4.1, the development of this programme followed the key principles of the national environmental policy, in particular that of sustainable utilisation of available resources, and the insistence on people-centred participatory methodologies. The commercialisation trend observed in the farm enterprise and micro-finance components is one of the anti-poverty strategies stipulated in the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture. To be noted here are contradictory implications of the policy goals, especially between modernisation and environmental sustainability. Sustainable development and modernisation in its traditional form are historically antithetical and hence a potential source of tension (also see sections 2.2.1 and 9.2.2).

My research focused on Sustainable agriculture and food security and Farm enterprise support. Apart from a direct link with the environment, both components used education and training as key implementation strategies. This made them more relevant to my study than the micro-finance component of the programme. The two must also be seen as key pillars of Uganda's environmental policy and as integral components of Uganda's agricultural policy enshrined in the national Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) as mentioned earlier (MAAIF and MFPED 2000, MNR 1995).

The Sustainable agriculture and food security component was to precede Farm enterprise support in the training of the farmers. It was intended that farmers satisfying the criteria for food security through sustainable agricultural practices would then qualify to join the Farm enterprise support component. The aim of the farm enterprise support component was to inaugurate

smallholder farmers into doing farming as a business (in line with the PMA), as opposed to food security per se, which did not differ much from subsistence farming (VEDCO 1999). While this was a sign of socio-economic transformation, it involved key tensions between the economic, social and environmental sustainability goals mentioned above. As farmers struggled to become more economically sustainable, they came into conflict with some of the key principles of sustainable agriculture that the organisation had cherished and advocated for a long time (see section 8.8.5).

5.4.2.2 Sustainable agriculture and food security

The programme defined sustainable agriculture as agriculture that is ecologically sound, economically viable, socially and culturally just, humane and adaptable (VEDCO 1999). By being ecologically sound, the quality of the environment is maintained and enhanced and the natural resources conserved. Economic viability of agriculture is ensured if a farmer's returns can cover the production costs, while at the same time guaranteeing a decent livelihood for the farmer's family. Social and cultural justice in this case entails the fair treatment of farming individuals and communities, free from marginalisation on the basis of social or cultural factors like class, gender, ethnicity, religion or race. Sustainable agriculture, in being humane, is expected to recognise the fundamental dignity of all human beings and to respect and nurture both animals and plants. It is supposed to be adaptable to local conditions and changes that may occur in a specific setting. This view of sustainable agriculture corresponded with what Pretty (1995) and Reijntje *et al* (1992) had earlier written of sustainable agriculture.

a) Practical training in agriculture

Practical agricultural training as the main activity of the SA component of the programme was composed of among other things: the mobilisation and sensitisation of farmers with regard to food security, training in soil fertility management, pest and disease control and the integration of crop and animal husbandry. The training programme consisted of five-day specialised workshops in:

- Soil fertility management tailored to banana establishment and management
- Root crop production (cassava, yams and sweet potatoes)
- Vegetable gardening (spring onions, tomatoes, cabbage and indigenous vegetables)
- Animal integration (nutrient cycling, fodder and pasture establishment and exposure to referral services for livestock health management)
- Field production and post-harvest handling of cereals,

The training approach and focus was based on the principles of LEISA (Low external input sustainable agriculture).

Programme activities:

Six sensitisation and awareness seminars **were conducted** in each of the two counties of Katikamu and Bamunanika. The purpose of the seminars was to share the findings of the baseline study with local farmers and to introduce the new programme as a response to the problems identified by the baseline study. The seminars were also to be used by the community to identify workshop sites for practical training in agriculture.

Participatory selection of twenty-five lead-farmers to be trained in the practical skills of sustainable agriculture and food security. The selection of farmers was to be according to the following criteria:

- Willingness to improve the management of existing gardens
- Demonstrated commitment of the farmer as a good adopter
- Equal opportunity for both men and women
- Selected and approved by group members
- Ability and willingness to support fellow farmers
- Each village was to select one farmer at the start.

Twenty-five training workshops were to be held for the selected lead farmers in the different parishes by the end of September 2000. The training would also include the establishment of demonstration gardens at parish and village levels.

After undergoing the training, the lead farmers were to return to their respective villages, recruit and offer similar training to at least ten farmers each, assisted by the extension workers. The establishment of village-based demonstration gardens was intended as a point of reference for future learning.

Extension workers were to conduct follow-up visits to the farmers, to see how they were implementing the programme and to offer field support where farmers needed it. This scheme was to continue for a period of three months after the training. Thereafter,

support would only be given to those farmers who demanded it, either as an organised group or through group leaders.

VEDCO expected as result of this approach, to have a multiplier effect on 6480 families of adopters by the end of the project period of three years (see Table 3.1, DC 07). The farmers were expected to be fully 'equipped' with skills in sustainable agriculture, including the technology of soil fertility management, banana plantation establishment, root-crop management, vegetable gardening and sustainable control and management of pests and diseases. Comprehensive as this programme appeared, its tone was unequivocally technocratic, raising questions regarding the credentials of participants in the programme.

b) Farm enterprise support

The main purpose of farm-enterprise support, the second major component of the programme was to identify viable opportunities for income-generation by smallholder farmers, in order to enable them to improve household incomes once food security was established. The component was intended to provide technical assistance to farmers to enable them to diversify their agricultural production for the market, using sustainable agricultural principles and practices. This was an advanced component of the programme in which only farmers seen to have satisfied the food security criteria were to be included. The farmers who participated would be selected by the community on the basis of their leadership and entrepreneurial ability and capacity to guide other community members in production, marketing and income generation for diversification.

c) Farm business education

Farm business education consisted of the sensitisation of farmers regarding farm enterprises with the potential to increase household incomes. It was aimed at farmers interested in diversifying their production and income sources. The goal was to transform the farmers' peasant/subsistence mindset to a more commercially oriented one that would enable them to do 'farming as a business'. Farmers would also be trained in the management of tradable crops, in particular the high-value crops¹² such as chillies, okra, green pepper and green vegetables identified during the baseline survey. Other tradable crops included fruits like pineapples, passion fruit, mangoes, avocados, guava, oranges and tangerines, both for the international and local markets. Participatory training methods and techniques were recommended for these activities (VEDCO 1999).

At the end of every workshop, the participants would develop a collective action plan for the production of tradable crops. The plans had to include, among other things, a one-day farm-enterprise awareness session carried out by participants in their respective communities in order to introduce high-value crops to their colleagues, who had not attended the training (VEDCO 1999).

d) Specialised training in management of tradable crops

Five-day workshops were to be specially organised for farmers to introduce quality management of tradable crops to meet the quality standards of local and international buyers. The workshops had both theoretical and practical components. The practical part was composed of community-based demonstration sessions, while the theory consisted of classroom-based activities. Although the training was intended for those farmers who had attained food security, one of the extension workers told me that the number of farmers at that level was still very low. He believed that many of the farmers categorised as commercial were actually still in the transitional stage and had not yet attended the food security course. The introduction of commercialised farming to farmers in this category at this stage signalled the potential emergence of key tensions between the principles of sustainable agriculture and what farmers came to see as the pressures of commercialised farming (see section 8.8.5).

The demonstrations on growing tradable crops focused on cost effective production planning, nursery bed establishment, crop management techniques, harvesting and post-harvest handling. The demonstrations being village-based were expected to attract many other local farmers wishing to diversify their own production. This indeed happened in the early stages, but faltered due to some internal dynamics related flawed assumptions about community participation (see section 6.4.2).

e) Training of lead farmers

The training of lead farmers was intended to ensure sustainability by training local people to support fellow farmers in the same way as the NGO and government extension workers did.

The support included:

- basic advice in analysing the viability of farmers' projects and production plans
- production planning to cater for food security and market demands
- establishing and monitoring on-farm demonstrations in crop management

¹² These are crops which provide a high return on the initial investment within a short time frame

- assisting farmers with quality control, particularly in field crop-management, harvesting, assembling, sorting and packaging of market-bound crops
- assessing fellow farmers' input needs and linking them to reliable sources
- organising farmers into marketing groups for collective linkage with crop buyers

VEDCO's assumption here was that cooperation between farmers was a foregone conclusion, forgetting that some of the farmers they were planning for had transcended the traditional subsistence level of production. By focusing on production for the market they were subject to market laws, which are not cooperative but competitive.

The lead farmers were to be trained in several aspects including 'Training of Trainers' (T.O.T) in production management, harvesting, sorting and crop assemblage, seed-handling technology and crop marketing. They were to be linked to government extension services, research institutions and organisations like the National Agricultural Research Institute at Kawanda, Namulonge agricultural research station and the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) for technical backup and assistance after VEDCO had phased out the direct provision of services. Each lead farmer was to be given a toolbox and a bicycle with a distinctive overall bearing the name VEDCO to facilitate their extension work. In order to sustain the lead farmers' services, marketing agencies benefiting from their services were required to pay them a compensation fee for the time and effort invested by these people.

f) Accessing high quality seeds and market information services

VEDCO had an ongoing programme on Agro-marketing and fair trade, linking farmers to reliable market outlets. The programme also provided information services to interested farmers and linked producer groups to crop buyers. Extension services in quality assurance and standardisation of marketable crops were among the other services offered. Farmers were expected to access these services at an annual cost of 8000 shillings (US \$5) per farmer.

Quality seeds were to be accessed through an already existing link with an input distribution system, a component of the Agro-marketing and fair trade project¹³. VEDCO had also established links with the National Seed Project and importers of vegetable seeds with a view of selling to VEDCO farmers at a wholesale price. It was also expected that the lead farmers would link fellow farmers to sources of inputs even further.

¹³ This was one of the ongoing programmes introduced to strengthen VEDCO's agri-business and marketing department.

5.4.3 My assessment of the programme as it stood

In brief, this is the VEDCO programme I worked with for my research. I found the programme inspiring in several ways:

- Although I had not participated in its drafting, I was initially convinced that the programme had a solid base, having been developed as a response to concrete challenges identified in the community, but later this assumption became open to question. As the limitations of an RDDA¹⁴ approach began to emerge, it became clear that even if the 'needs analysis'/research phase had been done in a 'participatory' manner, the technocratic air surrounding it remains a key obstacle.
- It focused on issues that reflected a cross-section of Uganda's environmental policy concerns, in particular those related to natural resource management, agricultural transformation, and poverty alleviation. In my view, the programme was well integrated unlike some which focus on only one single issue as if life could be viewed in such a narrow way.
- The unequivocal declaration that the programme would be implemented in a participatory manner was another good point, in my opinion.
- The organisational structure and leadership commitment to the cause of the poor and disadvantaged illustrated in the programme goals and activities, in particular the interest in poverty alleviation (see table 3.1, DC 06), was particularly inspiring and
- Finally the spirit of self-reliance VEDCO aimed to instil among its rural partners through capacity building, to me, constituted the missing link in many community-based programmes.

5.4.4 Concluding comments

The above positive issues notwithstanding, the programme in many respects represented a technocratic, one-sided endeavour by VEDCO to implement what it saw as a transformative agenda for the community. This did not augur well for the confessed emancipatory goals hinted in the programme objectives. Some assumptions like the use of lead farmers to spearhead community-based implementation without taking their personal interests into consideration were not anticipated, as illustrated by the contradictory results that emerged during

¹⁴ RDDA is a top-down approach to programme development and implementation, based on the traditional centre-to-periphery model. The model entrusts the destiny of people to the hands of a few experts believed to have the capacity to analyse the problems of others and come up with appropriate responses to identified problems (Janse van Rensburg 1995, Popkewitz *ibid*).

implementation (see section 6.4.1.1 and 6.4.2), was a case in point. Over-dependency on donor funds as indicated in section 5.3 is factor that was bound to cause problems during the implementation of the programme. The programme goals combining economic, social and ecological interests also seemed complex and challenging. In short, the programme looked challenging, but attractive and as I report in chapter six, VEDCO began implementing it in February 2000, and so began the first phase of Participatory Action Research discussed in chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE ONE
POLICY PLAYING OUT IN THE FIELD:
IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based on what can be seen as the first cycle of the participatory action research process, which followed the situational analysis (CH.4) and stretched from my first official involvement with VEDCO in February 2000 to the first formal reflection meeting among the project staff, in May 2000. I spent most of January and February 2000 trying to understand the organisation, the way it operated and the characteristics of their programmes. Fortunately, I arrived in VEDCO at a time when the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Programme described in chapter five was being launched. This gave me the opportunity to participate in the orientation to the new programme with the other staff members.

6.1 SENSITISATION WORKSHOPS

In the second part of February, the organisation embarked on sensitisation workshops to make the community aware of the new programme. I attended four of the six sensitisation workshops in the different parishes. Although VEDCO organised the workshops, PLAN International also participated. PLAN International had offered financial support to VEDCO to implement the programme. This resulted in PLAN International's views, interests and goals being represented in the programme, which in a way affected the original goals and interests of VEDCO and the communities. This influence became obvious when farmers began to demand handouts and other material incentives knowing that that was PLAN's method of operation, although it contradicted VEDCO's principle of self-reliance.

My first impression of the programme as it was explained to the community was that it was an interesting participatory programme capable of transforming the prevailing situation of poverty and desperation in the community. However, I also observed that while VEDCO had some very experienced, confident and apparently competent mid-level staff, almost all the fieldworkers at the grass-roots level were new graduates from college. I saw this as an indication of possible capacity challenges during implementation because of the nature of the programme, in particular its demand for a participatory approach that required persons with sound experience

in working with communities at the grass-root level, more so, because of the concern raised about some Ugandan tertiary institutions which tend to concentrate on theory at the expense of practice, thereby producing graduates lacking practical experience (Okech, *et al.* 2000).

The capacity challenges to staff mentioned emerged early in the programme during the sensitisation seminars. The facilitation of the workshops was not as participatory as I had expected, participatory implementation being the professed strategy of the programme. I, however, justified the flawed participatory approach on the basis of the purpose of workshops being intended to inform communities about the outcomes of the baseline study and to introduce the new programme.

The sensitisation workshops also involved the development of tentative action plans for the implementation of programme activities in each of the parishes. Participants collectively decided on a number of things including: the timing and venues for the sustainable agriculture and food security workshops, village based meetings for the selection of lead farmers to be trained and venues for village based training by the lead farmers.

6.2 PLANNING THE ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

By the end of February, I had become almost fully familiar with VEDCO's organisation, the research team and programmes. I had attended several management and general staff meetings, sensitisation seminars, training workshops in sustainable agriculture and a general orientation programme with newly recruited staff members. Participating in the sensitisation workshops had also helped me to grasp the programme better and to get closer to the implementing staff at both the personal and professional levels.

Preparations for the action phase took three major forms. The first leg involved the training of staff in sustainable agriculture principles, practices and food security management. The purpose of this training was to 'equip' them with the 'right content' to 'deliver' to the farmers during the workshops¹⁵. The workshop was organised and conducted by Environmental Alert, a partner NGO with VEDCO. This was an intensive two-week training course for all VEDCO staff that would be participating in the implementation of the programme. It involved lectures and

¹⁵ I have purposely used the terms 'equip', 'right content' and 'deliver' the way they appeared in the objectives of this workshop to highlight the instrumentalist educational discourse characterising the programme, which points to

practical field activities to practise what had been theoretically discussed in the lectures. The content covered the following issues:

- Sustainable Agriculture (SA), the concept and principles
- LEISA concept and principles
- Recommended tilling practices
- Soil conservation practices
- Management of essential cash and food crops
- Farm planning and feasibility analysis
- Pests and diseases affecting different crops
- Integrated pest and disease management
- The concept of food security
- Planning for food security
- Extension approaches
- Training methods
- Establishment of demonstration gardens

While a combination of content covering both skills and knowledge in agriculture and training was stipulated for the programme, the degree of detail for the two differed a great deal. The bulk of the content consisted of agronomical knowledge and practices with a scanty sprinkling of methodological issues. Although this might not have been a conscious intention on the part of the planners, it goes a long way in exposing the underlying technocratic orientation to education (Robottom 1991) informing practice at community level.

The second leg was intended to integrate the research into the daily implementation of the programme. I trained staff in Participatory Action Research methodology, principles and practices in preparation for the integration of the research component into the programme implementation process, specifically to add an evaluative/action-reflection dimension to their way of working.

The research training emphasised among other things:

- Justification for research on the implementation process

the neoclassical educational values underlying the programme, despite the professed emancipatory goals of the national environmental policy and the NGO's agenda.

- Why and how to integrate participation in daily methods of work through adherence to participatory principles and practices
- What constitutes participatory action research
- What to look for as practitioner researchers during the research process
- Using personal participation diaries
- Taking notes in the field and during meetings and workshops
- Engaging participants in a critical dialogue
- Inspiring participants to get actively involved in programmes
- Reversing the power relations in the field by passing on the initiative and control to the local people thereby undoing the top-down extractive relations in favour of the more democratic and empowering people- led process (Chambers 1997).

This training was expected to help extension workers develop skills and capacities to:

- a) plan and facilitate participatory learning sessions with themselves in the role of researchers at the back of their minds
- b) select and use training methods and techniques that would enable a balanced process of learning and participation (to share the facts and information without undermining learners' capacity to participate fully in the process) i.e. not to be constrained by the participatory process in their facilitation
- c) be able to continuously reflect on their way of facilitating the learning process, before, during and after the sessions
- d) identify challenges and problems within their own way of acting as facilitators, and take deliberate steps to address them
- e) look at emerging problems as opportunities to learn and improve rather than as indicators of inadequacy
- f) recognise that sometimes it might be necessary for them to change their ways of acting as facilitators, and not simply always struggle to 'change others'
- g) be willing and ready to receive other points of view.

The third leg of the Training of Trainers workshops involved the planning of training workshops in LEISA and Food Security. These workshops constituted the first phase of the entire programme. Important as this phase was, it received the least preparation. The coordinator charged with responsibility to plan for the workshop at this level apparently held a rather

simplistic and mechanical view of planning. He saw his responsibility as, to ensure that participants had been informed, that workshop materials were in place, and that facilitators informed in time. We did not meet as a group to review the content to be covered by the various facilitators, which would have prevented duplication and inappropriate levels of language usage. We also did not agree on the methods and techniques to be used during sessions, share facilitation-related roles or decide on how to assess the success of the workshop. This was apparently in line with how VEDCO had been operating in the past and pointed at the urgency for the need to change in order to cope with the current participatory orientation.

I later felt that I was partly to blame for believing erroneously that all VEDCO staff were well-versed in organising and running workshops professionally. The lack of proper planning greatly affected the first day of the workshop and after that we had to redraw the strategies. We had acted naively when we assumed that the coordinator had done the right things without crosschecking with him to find out exactly what he had done. On the other hand it was difficult and still too early for me to intervene, and I finally thought it was probably for the best action for, apart from avoiding possible rifts with staff at such an early stage, it gave me a chance to justifiably come in later, when everybody had seen that the earlier approach had failed.

6.3 THE ACTION PHASE

Workshops in sustainable agriculture

The first workshop was held at Katikamu Community Centre and was attended by twenty-five farmers, eleven of whom were women and fourteen men. It was a five-day intensive workshop covering the themes of LEISA and food security management. It covered ten specific areas of study namely:

- a) the concept and principles of sustainable agriculture
- b) LEISA principles
- c) management of soil fertility
- d) banana plantation establishment
- e) vegetable gardening
- f) root crop production and management
- g) integrating crop and animal husbandry
- h) farm planning

- i) food security planning
- j) setting banana demonstration gardens

All VEDCO field staff attended the workshop, which was facilitated by two programme officers and a senior extension worker.

The venue

The workshop was held at a Katikamu Community Centre near Wobulenzi town. The place seemed deserted and had not been used for some time. This was evident from the dust, bat droppings and cobwebs that littered the hall. The benches were arranged in a formal classroom setting, in rows one behind another. The hall was well ventilated, but the lighting was poor, entirely dependent on sunlight. This physical environment to say the least was not conducive for learning. This kind of atmosphere was counter-productive, and was likely to undermine learners' participation but also their comfort, a precondition for meaningful learning (Tight 1995).

6.3.1 The facilitation process

The sitting arrangement was reminiscent of a formal school set-up. The participants sat quietly and meekly in rows making the whole environment grave and tense. The sessions were dominated by long lectures with minimal interaction moments with participants. Facilitators seemed to have more to offer than the time available would allow. They were good speakers and well versed in the content, but I felt they were doing more lecturing than was necessary. The interaction between the facilitators and the participants was also limited to the latter listening to the former. There were no practical exercises of any kind during the sessions. Apart from a thirty-minute break for tea and a one-hour break for lunch, the participants were as busy taking notes as the facilitators were busy lecturing.

The rest of the facilitators/team were also passive for the greater part of the sessions save for those times when one or two would come up to help hang a news-print or manila chart on the wall. Facilitators asked participants to ask questions at the end of each session, as a rule. Whilst this is a good facilitation technique and practice, the way it was often done made one question the sincerity behind it, as many times it appeared to be a routine fulfilment of a list of rules, ensuring that all items on the 'hidden checklist had been checked'. Nevertheless, some participants were 'brave' enough to ask some questions, which were answered by the session facilitator him/herself, in most of the cases, apart from the few cases when other facilitators and

participants offered assistance. Although there was nothing obviously wrong with the facilitator answering the questions, from a socially critical perspective I saw it as a reflection of the neoclassical view of the facilitator/teacher as 'the source of knowledge' and learners as passive recipients (Freire 1970).

My role in the process

During the first day of the workshop, I decided to spend most of the time observing the facilitation process, the interaction between participants and facilitators and the actions of the rest of the facilitation team. There were some interesting observations that are worth reporting on here. While the learning sessions were characterised by the sombre mood described above, break times were in contrast very lively times. Participants and facilitators mingled and talked freely with no trace of the fear or suspicion that might have been reflected by the sombre and tense mood present during the sessions. I realised from the way they interacted that facilitators and participants knew each other well, at times very closely. They talked about each other's children by name, participants' farms, livestock and other home-related issues. This mood did not outlive the tea and lunch breaks, however, and as soon as we went back into the sessions, the subdued mood returned; facilitators became very serious; learners tensely listened with no trace of the free and relaxed environment of break-time. I then realised that regardless of what I saw, to the facilitators and participants everything was going well and wrote in my diary, 'no fear, no suspicion, it is just what things are and every one is doing the expected'.

At the end of day one of the workshop, I took the initiative to discover what comment participants had regarding the facilitation, content and other aspects of the workshop. Almost all participants expressed satisfaction with what they had gone through, some even praising facilitators for their 'clarity, and the wealth of knowledge they had exhibited'. This glorification of facilitators by the learners suggested an association with the neoclassical hierarchical view of knowledge (Higgs 1998) as a speciality of the training expert. Related to this was the constant demand for handouts by participants (see section 2.3.3.3).

Nevertheless, a number of them expressed some dissatisfaction. These people had three major concerns namely: the unwarranted mixing of English and Luganda during facilitation,

which participants referred to as *olunnabuddu*¹⁶, the high speed at which some facilitators ran the sessions and the lack of support learning materials like handouts and visual learning aids. The use of English was unpopular in the community as not all participants could speak it, yet all facilitators knew the local language. The extension workers found English more convenient to use, perhaps because they had learnt technical concepts, in school and later education, in English and had made no effort to translate these concepts into the local language understood by the majority of the people.

The number of participants referring to the first day as satisfactory made me feel greatly challenged and almost confused. I kept wondering whether they would have given me a different answer if I had not already identified myself as part of the facilitating team. As a result, I ended day one with mixed feelings; I felt we had not done what was expected of us. My colleagues on the contrary were happy that all that was supposed to be covered had actually been covered without overflowing into the second day. I was particularly disappointed that despite the time we had spent learning to facilitate participatory workshops and learning as much from participants as they learnt from us, there was almost nothing to reflect the time and effort invested therein. This anomaly reflected the fundamental shift required to transform the reigning 'banking model' (Freire 1970) ("exhibiting a wealth of knowledge") to a true participatory approach and it exposed the potential pressure that kind of attitude exerts on the junior extension workers who did not have so much to "exhibit".

6.3.3 Early assessment of action

Feeling the need to reverse the emerging trend, I requested the workshop coordinator to organise a one-hour debriefing session in the morning before beginning the second day. I used this session to lead the group into an assessment of the previous day and to use the assessment to plan for the second day.

The questions in Box 6.1 were developed to assist in starting off the discussions.

¹⁶ This was a group slang used to refer to English. Lunnabuddu is one of the local unofficial dialects of Luganda, the main language spoken by the Baganda people in central Uganda, including Luwero district where the study was conducted.

Box 6.1 Day one Review Questions

1. Write two statements on separate pieces of paper that best describe the first day of the workshop.
2. Write one thing you liked most about the workshop and why.
3. Write one thing you disliked most about the workshop and why.
4. Give one reason why you think things happened the way they did.
5. Suggest two ways in which the workshop could be made better.

Source: generated during the workshop

Staff described day one differently but most responses indicated that all had not been well. The words used to describe it on one hand included: too tense, very serious, marathon, boring, rigid and could have been better. On the other hand, those who had no problems described the first day as normal, good and satisfactory.

Things they liked most included

- Being able to finish the agenda for the first day
- Attendance of all invited participants
- Punctuality of both facilitators and most participants

Things they did not like were

- Sitting for long hours without practical activities
- Lack of ice breakers and energisers, which made sessions boring
- Monotony of lecturing
- Absence of materials for illustration
- Failure to involve learners
- Crowding of activities
- Domination by some participants
- Facilitators failed to control some domineering participants

Why did things go the way they did?

- Lack of collective planning
- Failure to take into consideration things learnt in the PAR workshop

- Not wanting to change from our ways of doing things
- This is the way things have always been done
- The time did not allow for a lot of participation
- Villagers are not easy to train; they don't want to get involved

The way in which the facilitators acted confirmed their pre-conceived ideas, expectations and perspectives on education and training in just the same way as the farmers.

Suggestions for the next day of the workshop

- Collectively plan before going to the workshop
- Share out roles even if not everybody was to facilitate
- Plan practical activities during the session such as group work, visit some of the homes in the neighbourhood to experience some of the issues discussed during the sessions
- Introduce energisers and ice-breakers to bring life to sessions
- Make use of participants' experiences by brainstorming before presenting a 'package'¹⁷
- Let farmers with relevant experiences tell their stories so that the facilitators need just fill in the gaps rather than telling them what they already know
- Ask some participants to take on roles like writing on the news print, hanging up cards and charts
- Develop some charts to illustrate different points discussed in the sessions
- Think of a video show to illustrate some points and to break the monotony of the lecture.

Interestingly, all the views raised had been discussed during the preparatory workshop, which implied that it was not a question of not knowing what to do. It was, a good learning opportunity for me regarding the pains of introducing change. While I had always believed in the power of training as a way to positive transformation, I had apparently viewed it from an instrumentalist point of view, as a 'one-shot therapy' but this proved me wrong. I realised the enormity of the transformative task ahead of us and also that if meaningful change was to occur, it had to be carefully planned and patiently executed, hence the need to re-plan the workshop and make sure that all the gaps identified are addressed.

6.3.4 Planning for the second day

While this planning was practically meant for the second day of the workshop, in principle it was to cater for all the remaining workshops. A number of changes were introduced on the second day of the workshop. For example it was agreed that while it was necessary to have a

¹⁷ I found the term 'package' frequently used especially by participants referring to what the facilitator was to deliver in terms of learning material to them. They often referred to it as 'ettu lyaffe omusomesa lyatuletedde' meaning 'our package brought by the teacher'. This was an indication of participants' expectations and often became a big challenge to novice facilitators who felt obliged to deliver a tangible package. This attitude influenced the response of the facilitators who felt most of the time that they must have something to deliver in

lead facilitator, it was also essential that other members contributed in a more meaningful way. Lectures were thus broken up into shorter sessions of up to twenty-five minutes each, to allow other facilitators to take part in the facilitation. The use of group activities was also encouraged and deliberate efforts were made to ensure that they became part of the facilitation process.

It was also agreed that facilitators begin sessions with a brainstorming exercise about the topic, which would be followed by a discussion and then the facilitator's contribution. We agreed to take deliberate steps to involve participants in the facilitation by identifying those with relevant experiences and requesting them to share with the rest of the group. Techniques like VIPP 'idea cards' (section 3.8.2) and buzz groups were recommended to ensure the active involvement of participants in the learning exercise. In addition, the co-ordinator was asked to identify farms within the neighbourhood where participants could be taken to learn from appropriate examples of cases in the surrounding environment.

Facilitators were asked to develop facilitation aids to illustrate key points in the sessions. They were also asked to use the right terminology to explain issues and avoid the mixing of English and Luganda as it had already revealed itself as a potential cause of confusion to participants.

6.3.5 Monitoring participation at different levels

In addition, I suggested several measures to monitor participation at different levels. The measures included the designing of three separate instruments namely: a) personal session-based participation diary, b) daily workshop evaluation guide and c) final evaluation of each workshop.

6.3.5.1 The personal session-based participation diary

This was a one-page document distributed to participants in each session to be filled in at the end of the session, indicating how each of them actually took part in session activities. The document had a few guiding questions and space to mention any additional activities the participant might have engaged in during the session (see appendix 6.1).

6.3.5.2 The daily evaluation guide

The daily evaluation guide was a simple list of open-ended questions that would help the participant to reflect on the entire day's activities and give a personal assessment of the

order to be seen as capable. Hence the tendency to lecture all the time was a way of delivering the 'package' ('ettu').

situation (appendix 6.2). Both the daily evaluation and the session participation diaries were analysed on a daily basis by the research team and feed-back was shared with the rest of the group before the beginning of sessions on each day to ensure that those issues that needed collective action were addressed.

6.3.5.3 The end of workshop evaluation

At the end of every workshop, a participatory evaluation of the entire process was conducted. The evaluation involved the matching of the workshop objectives, participant expectations and participant assessment of outcomes. Final evaluation reports were written by the extension worker responsible for the particular community and later shared with the participants.

6.3.6 Subsequent workshops

In the remaining days of the first workshop and those that followed, we tried to implement as many of the suggested changes as we could. We specifically emphasised collective facilitation, restructured the sessions breaking them into lecturrettes¹⁸; setting clear roles for participants; ensuring that participants got involved and using participatory techniques like 'VIPP idea cards', buzz groups, participant presentations and farmer-visits. Facilitators were also encouraged to prepare illustration charts and simple fact sheets in Luganda for participants. The fact-sheets were summaries of facilitators' notes, written in simple language and presented in Luganda the language used by the local people. In addition, session-based personal participation diaries, daily evaluations and end of workshop participatory evaluations were made mandatory in the subsequent workshops.

We observed a tremendous improvement in the quality of facilitation and the levels of participation by all participants. Facilitators took deliberate steps to create opportunities for participants to get actively involved, using a broad range of techniques. Despite these efforts there were still a number of weaknesses. While there was an improvement in the facilitation of sessions, for example, I observed significant anomalies during the out-of-class practical activities, in particular the setting up of demonstration gardens. Facilitators conducted the demonstrations at a very high speed, as if they were simply going through the motions, or demonstrating that they knew what to do – rather than demonstrating with the aim of sharing

¹⁸ Lecturrettes are short lectures of between 15 and 25 minutes interspersed with short periods of discussion of the key issues raised in the lecture. They help both facilitators and participants to clarify issues as they move forward.

their knowledge and enabling participants to learn the relevant skills. Sometimes, instead of letting the participants have hands on, practical activities, the facilitators did the work. The reserved, slow and aged participants were often left unaided, and, as a result, only the active and outgoing participants got involved in the activities. The above-described scenario puts a question mark over the use of demonstration as a training method in emancipatory learning and confirmed Hillbur's view of demonstration as a technocratic, top-down approach (1997). Practical as demonstration may appear, it can perpetuate hierarchical power relations in a learning situation contrary to the anticipated goals of emancipatory learning.

6.3.6.1 Village-based workshops

The purpose of the initial workshops was to avail a selected number of lead farmers with practical skills and knowledge to transfer to fellow farmers in the community. This was to be done with the support of extension workers and programme officers. Each lead farmer was to mobilise and train at least ten (10) farmers in his or her community in order to achieve a multiplier effect. The establishment of village-based demonstration gardens to illustrate the different farming styles and technologies would follow the training. It is worth noting here that this cascading of the training programme still represented the traditional technocratic approach to education and training, and contradicted the principles of participatory learner-based education intended in the programme (also see 6.6. and 9.4.1.1b).

I had the opportunity to attend as many as ten village-based workshops run by the trained lead-farmers supported by extension workers. I observed several key issues that I will share in this discussion. While many of the lead farmers had grasped the basic agronomical knowledge and practices needed by their compatriots, they still lacked the techniques and practical facilitation skills to run participatory learning sessions. The lack of facilitation skills was evident in most of the sessions I attended. As the extension workers had done in the workshops, lead-farmers lectured to farmers like students in a formal school situation. The situation was often worse with those lead-farmers that lacked proper command of the subject matter. This mode of facilitation made it possible only for the better-educated farmers to participate and many times, session became a dialogue between the elite farmers and the facilitators. This experience challenged me to reflect more on the training workshops that produced the lead-farmers. I realised that although the workshops were intended to turn lead-farmers into some kind of community-based facilitators, the training did not specifically include facilitation/TOT techniques. It had instead concentrated on agronomical practices and other technical details of sustainable agriculture, an

approach Haverkort *et al* (1991) discourage when they contend that agronomical skills without special social skills and techniques cannot lead to successful participatory farmer development. As a result, I made two important observations in the first instance, the behaviour of the lead-farmers demonstrated the paradox of self-reproduction whereby systems, and people working in them, reproduce themselves and within it, I saw the difficulties and dangers associated with transforming ideologically contradictory systems. Ironically, while the programme was in principle participatory, in practice it was being twisted by the underlying technocratic educational orientation. In the second place, this situation was a challenge to the assumption that, by using the lead-farmer approach, knowledge and skills could be trickled down through the cascade model of training. While it might be true that knowledge and skills can trickle down, the main question is what bits of it can trickle down and in which direction?

The scenario was even worse when it came to the establishment of the village demonstration gardens. Lead-farmers and extension workers repeated exactly the mistakes that had been discouraged during the earlier workshops. They for instance took all the measurements for the demonstration gardens made the natural pesticide concoctions, which were part of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programme, and led in the making of compost. The ordinary farmers did the more physical tasks like uprooting wilt-infected coffee trees, uprooting and 'deweeviling' banana suckers, digging pits and carrying manure to the garden. This exposed an interesting dimension of participation, tending towards what different people have labelled the 'cheap labour concept' of participation (Mbilinyi & Rakesh 2002, Srinivasan 1993), where local people's participation in development programmes is reduced to mere provision of cheap labour. This approach to participation falls short on the empowering ingredient and contradicts the emancipatory goal of the project. Whilst participation, guided by an emancipatory agenda among other things, aims to generate dialogue and self-reflection essential to bringing about the expected social transformation, the kind of participation nurtured in this case was exploitative and perpetuated the existing power gradient instead of transforming it.

6.3.6.2 Post-workshop follow-ups

After the training, farmers were expected to put into practice whatever they had learnt on their farms. The role of the extension workers and the lead-farmers was to visit farmers' gardens and offer the required on-the-spot guidance. Like the rest of the research team, I visited a good number of farmers in the parishes of Musaale in Katikamu County, and Kibirizi and Kiteme in

Bamunanika County. Farmer-visits were also intended to monitor the rate at which farmers were adopting the skills they had learnt during the workshops. Whilst this goal of post-workshop follow-ups may sound plausible, it only makes educational sense from the technocratic instrumentalist perspective, where a linear relationship between learning and behavioural change of the learners is assumed and considered a criterion for judging successful learning programmes (Higgs 1998). The follow-ups were based on a common technocratic extension practice known Train and Visit (T&V). The approach has been criticised for institutionalising extension's hierarchy perpetuating structures that prevent the upward flow of information despite the intention (Pretty 1995).

Despite the efforts invested in the programme, there were disappointments. The rate of adoption was low. It was still difficult, four months into the implementation, to tell the difference between farmers who had participated in the practical agricultural training workshops and those who had not. This was in spite of the large numbers of enthusiastic farmers participating in the workshops and promising to practise the skills, knowledge and technology learned. We realised that improvement in facilitation skills alone was not enough to impact on people's capacity to act on their own. There still seemed to be a number of factors to be explored that would probably lead to meaningful transformation in people's actions and interests.

6.4 REFLECTION PHASE (Level I)

The value of reflection in Participatory Action Research cannot be underestimated. In the case of this research, it constituted a major phase of ongoing data analysis to clarify, deepen and arrange information, understand interconnections, examine cause-effect links and identify core elements in order to arrive at decisions that could lead to action (Guijt and Braden 1998). In this way, the direction of the research and project was amended on an ongoing basis.

I would not like to talk about reflection as if it was an entirely separate phase of the study. The whole process was characterised by different forms of reflection at different levels. Each week, day and session of the workshop were preceded by spirals of planning, action, reflection and re-planning of further action, and followed by mandatory evaluation, as indicated above (see 6.3.5.3). This process made possible the continuous refining of the action and the products of our inquiry. This notwithstanding, we saw it as essential to conduct a more comprehensive

review of the entire process, including the goals of the programme, the strategy and the interim outcomes of the programme.

The review was intended to establish among other things the extent to which the programme was progressing according to the plan as stated in the project document. It also aimed to establish the emerging challenges, staff understanding of the programme and their capacity to translate it into appropriate activities, and external and internal factors affecting the programme and the drawing up of new strategies according to the outcomes of the review.

6.4.1 The Review and Reflection workshop

In May 2000, three and a half months after the launch of the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security programme, we (the research team) discussed the necessity to have an in-depth analysis of the state of the programme. The purpose was to identify areas needing attention and plan to address them. This however needed to be approved by the management committee or the Executive Director on the behalf of management. Participants included: six extension workers; two programme co-ordinators; one programme officer; the Executive Director and me as the main facilitator of the workshop. The team chose me to be the main facilitator of the workshop because as a non-employee of VEDCO they felt I was a neutral person and likely to be more objective. I had also raised a number of issues in discussions with the various staff, which had made them believe in my capacity to lead the process. My role as a facilitator of this review affected me in several ways; as a facilitator it placed me in a special position with power to steer the process, a position that could easily be abused. It was indeed challenging to strike a balance between my research interest and responsibility to objectively spearhead the organisation's agenda. I carefully took the challenge to guide the process without frustrating any participant's genuine interest to play an active role.

Secondly, I found this challenge to be an opportunity to legitimately integrate the participatory action research agenda with the organisational programme goals and aspirations. On a negative note, by taking on the role of a facilitator, I did not really have time to carefully record and arrange the ideas and insights in the way that I would have done if I had been an ordinary participant. In the end, I depended on the notes taken by one of the extension workers on my behalf. The notes had a number of gaps as she summarised most of the issues at times making interpretations that in the end were difficult to understand.

6.4.1.1 The workshop process

As the chief facilitator, I started by trying to establish whether there was a common understanding of programme goals and objectives among the different staff.

a) Review of objectives and expectations

We used the VIPP idea cards method (see section 3.8.2.8) to generate ideas about programme objectives. Each participant was given three cards to write a different objective of the programme he/she knew on each of the cards. We discussed each set of objectives mentioned by participants and compared them with the programme objectives to establish the difference in understanding of the different members of staff. The outcome revealed that although the participants expressed the objectives in different ways, they were very close to the original programme objectives. In fact, some of the participants' objectives were clearer than the original programme objectives (section 5.4.2.1). It was clear also that environmental sustainability did not feature as an independent objective except as implied in phrases like "improvement of farming practices" (crop management), "use of local resources to produce food all the year round", "animal integration and fertility management". The same applied to the method of implementation, the participatory approach was neither mentioned, nor implied in the objectives raised by both the extension workers and the managers. The possible implication here was that 'environment' and 'participation' were perhaps not prioritised in practice, although stated in the policy and programme goals. This signalled an emerging gap between policy intentions and concrete practice that continually manifested itself in the programme.

b) Staff expectations

I asked staff to state their individual expectations as they conducted the practical agricultural training. The purpose was to gauge staff commitment and their attachment and interest in the programme, for I felt the three could influence the extent of success. Interestingly, none of the expectations raised gave any indication of the personal and professional interest of staff (like professional growth, gaining experience for future use or love for community-based work) in the programme. Instead they listed the organisational targets and indicators of success, such: ensuring that all 25 lead-farmers setting up mini demonstration gardens for their communities; mobilising farmers into groups and increasing the number of adopters. This apparently pointed to the nature of pressure imposed on extension workers by the demands of their job, a situation highlighted in the organisational analysis presented in chapter seven.

c) Reflection on extent of implementation

Extension workers said that every activity earmarked for the period had been carried out, apart from in one parish (Kiteme) where Practical Agriculture workshops had not been conducted. All activities completed by the time of the review were listed on newsprint, another list of activities for the period as reflected in the project document was also outlined on another of newsprint. The group went about ticking those activities done and crossing out those not done. In spite of the general belief that activities had been performed, the extension workers raised the following problems encountered in the implementation process:

i) The demonstration gardens were not standardised and according to extension workers, each looked different from the others. While this was a genuine concern, it raised conceptual questions related to the confessed emancipatory agenda of the programme. For standardisation is an inappropriate ideal in a participatory programme where what is required is responsiveness to issues as they emerge within contexts. The concern reflected the underlying technicist educational mind-set of the extension workers and pointed at the nature of the 'shift' required by the organisation both in thought and action in order to implement the programme in the expected participatory manner.

ii) The number of farmers adopting the new practices was very small despite the number of participants in the workshops on practical agriculture. It was still difficult to tell the difference between farmers who had attended training and those who had not by looking at their gardens. The rate of transfer of knowledge and skills gained to their farms was very low. While this concern was genuine, it reflects a neo-classical view of education as a linear process whereby achievement is measured according to narrowly defined behavioural changes (Higgs 1998).

(iii) Extension messages were still being either misinterpreted or deliberately contradicted by farmers. Some farmers, for example, continued to inter-crop maize with bananas, sweet potatoes and cassava, which had been discouraged in training, as all of them are heavy feeders. Other farmers had insisted on using chemical fertilisers and pesticides although they had been taught how make compost and to control pests using cultural and biological methods.

(iv) VEDCO had expected that farmers would work collectively to establish and maintain parish and village demonstration gardens, but in most cases they only participated during the establishment and left the maintenance to the farmers on whose land such gardens had been

established. This was probably one of the major miscalculations and wrong assumptions about the community. The tendency to compete seemed more entrenched in the community than that of cooperation.

(v) Extension workers also reported that farmers were complaining about some of the sustainable agriculture practices. They singled out 'double digging' and Heap and Pit Compost and *fanya juu* and *fanya chini* trenches as time-consuming and demanding in terms of labour and energy.

6.4.2 Examining possible causes

With the main challenges identified, we decided to probe further for possible causes of the challenges. I asked participants (VEDCO staff) to break into sub-groups of three, and discuss the causes of these problems and report back after thirty minutes. Below is a summary of what extension workers saw as key causes of the stated challenges and problems:

- Extension workers argued that while it had been their good intention to use locally available planting materials to avoid creating the feeling that locally available planting materials were bad, the banana suckers brought by farmers were not properly disinfected, which led to the failure of some of them even to germinate. This put into question the way extension workers had communicated the sustainability message and their actual involvement with learners in executing the message.
- The failure by farmers to adopt the new farming practices was associated with the procedure and criteria used to select lead-farmers, inadequate access and control over land, and the timing of the training. The village-based workshops were for example conducted at a time when farmers were supposed to be preparing their own gardens for the planting season, which led many to abscond from the workshops. Delay in the release of the initial instalment of funds by donors led to the alteration of activity schedules, yet the date for accountability and reporting remained the same.
- Extension workers also reported that insufficient land for agriculture made some farmers behave as if they did not understand what had been taught. Inter-cropping of incompatible crops was for example associated with this problem. To farmers, inter-cropping was a survival strategy. There was a reported competition for land between cash and food crops

and in some households this took on a gender dimension¹⁹. Lack of labour was also mentioned as a cause of intercropping, farmers saw it as a way of saving on labour expenses since the same amount of money would be spent on maintaining more than one crop.

- Lack of cooperation and the unwillingness of farmers to work on collective demonstrations was associated with four major factors, amongst others.
 - (1) Some farmers saw it as offering free labour to those people on whose land the demonstrations were established.
 - (2) Conflicting interests among farmers as some of them were not actually interested in what was being promoted during the demonstrations.
 - (3) Others saw work on the demonstration gardens as trying to achieve too much on so small a scale, and did not see how what was being demonstrated could be effectively applied on the farmers' gardens, which were much larger.
 - (4) According to the extension workers, some farmers selected hard and rough mature bushes as sites for demonstration gardens. This made their colleagues feel that they were being exploited as a source of labour to do what their friends had failed to do on their own. Other farmers, it was said, were interested in free things and the moment they saw that VEDCO was not offering such things they withdrew.
 - (5) There was also a reported crisis on the final ownership of the demonstration gardens and the proceeds generated by them.

6.5 FURTHER REFLECTION ON UNDERLYING CAUSES (Level II)

¹⁹ I witnessed a case in Kibiriizi where a man offered land for the community to demonstrate the recommended way of planting bananas and coffee but did not consult his wife about it. After the establishment of the village garden the wife planted lines of maize and cassava. When the husband complained the wife said it was her role to feed the family and she could not imagine waiting for two years until the bananas were expected to mature yet she was to be expending her energy in the garden. When the husband insisted that the maize and cassava be uprooted the wife said she was not going to spend her energy in the garden again if her needs were not going to be listened to.

In addition to the above observations, I felt that there were still other possible issues underlying the concerns raised. To explore these issues further, I raised the following questions with the workshop participants:

- (1) How were the lead farmers selected?
- (2) What were the criteria for selection of demonstration sites and the actual process of selection?
- (3) How the choice of crops to be promoted was reached?
- (4) How would the lead-farmer benefit from the strategy followed?
- (5) How would the multiplier farmer benefit?
- (6) What was the relationship between VEDCO and these farmers, a donor, a facilitator or a partner?

Below are some of the responses to the questions generated by extension workers above.

6.5.1 Selection of lead-farmers to train in practical agriculture

The programme outlined the criteria and procedure for selecting lead-farmers (section 5.4.2.2a). It was not followed because the programme officer and the parish chairmen violated original selection procedure and did the selection themselves. According to the programme officer, the criteria were violated to save time since there had already been some delays. The abuse of the criteria intimated lack of understanding and faith in participatory processes on the part of the programme officer. It also raised questions as to whether VEDCO workers were aware of the gravity of the task ahead of them related to participatory programme implementation.

Some of the lead-farmers selected were according to some farmers and extension workers not the most appropriate choice. Many were accused of arrogance and standoffish tendencies, although they were good farmers on their own. It was also reported that some were not actually farmers, but businessmen and women; others had farms, but also had other jobs which took most of their time so that they left most of the work to labourers, while some were not actually fulltime residents in the communities.

Because there had been an earlier tendency by PLAN International to give free things to collaborating farmers, the chairmen reportedly selected relatives and friends as a way of enabling them to benefit from the project. Such people were often not real farmers interested in

the programme and they pulled out the moment they sensed that no material benefits would accompany the training activities. This was another of the unforeseen contextual dynamics that made genuine community participation difficult. It also brings out another dimension to community participation, the use of material incentives to lure the community to participate in communal activities was often quoted as one of the 'sicknesses' introduced by foreign NGOs during the resettlement period after the war in 1986.

6.5.2 Selection of demonstration sites was based on the following:

- a) Fertility of soils at a given site, in other words the soils had to be fertile.
- b) Accessibility to the main road for publicity purposes i.e. to attract passers-by.
- c) Capacity of the farmer donating the plot to farm his/her remaining land. The assumption was that such farmers would never fail to manage the demonstration garden even if others failed to assist them. This meant that such a farmer had to have access to physical labour or the financial capacity to hire labour from the open market. But, as already seen, being good farmers did not make them good community facilitators.
- d) Willingness of the farmer to offer his land for demonstration purposes. Most of the time the willingness of the farmer to offer land for demonstration purposes played a major role in deciding the location of the demonstration garden. This at times led to wrong choices as those with the land did not necessarily fulfil the other criteria. I witnessed two cases where families hosted demonstration gardens after the men had offered the land, but could not take the necessary responsibility to tend the gardens, leaving the burden to their already over-burdened wives.

Parish chairmen influenced the selection of demonstration sites in the same way programme officers and parish supervisors had influenced the selection of lead-farmers. Such acts highlighted the complexities involved in introducing a participatory culture into a community and the challenges of transformation from a highly technocratic to a participatory approach to development.

6.5.3 Choice of demonstration crops

According to VEDCO management, the choice of crops to be demonstrated was based on the findings of the baseline survey (section 5.4.1) conducted to inform the current programme. The results of the survey had however not been disseminated to all those who participated.

6.5.4 Lead-farmers' anticipated benefits from the programme activities

We tried to find out how the lead-farmers were going to benefit from the programme. This was part of our effort to establish the potential causes of motivation/de-motivation for lead-farmers to act. I had a feeling that lead-farmers would be co-operative and willing to assist others if they were doing something that was in some way beneficial to them.

We brainstormed as to what the potential benefits of the programme were to lead-farmers in order to motivate them to assist others, and we came up with the following list of benefits:

- Skills and knowledge as trainers
- Knowledge in planning farm activities
- Skills and knowledge in sustainable agricultural practices
- Prestige and self esteem as a leader
- Home improvement related to continuous visits by other people
- Planting materials offered for the demonstration established on his land

Box 6.2. To give or not to give free planting materials

While discussing the giving of free planting materials to demonstration farmers, some project staff argued that farmers should pay for them in cash because they were going to benefit from them when they matured. Others argued that if farmers received free things they would fail to take care of them in the long run. It was almost unanimously agreed that farmers begin to pay for the materials. I saw this attitude as unfair since each of these farmers had to offer ½ an acre of land for demonstration. I persuaded the team to compare the value of the land farmers were giving to that of the planting materials plus the invasion of the farmers' privacy when they allowed people to frequently visit their home to learn from the demonstration garden. I saw the staff attitude as unfair, paternalistic and denigrating to the demonstrating farmer and the spirit of voluntarism exhibited by farmers.

The issue was subjected to another long debate until it was finally accepted that the farmer's offer of land be considered as his/her contribution to the partnership. This debate was a useful opportunity for the staff to re-examine the organisation and also reflect on the fact that the collaboration was a partnership and not a relief programme.

6.5.5 Benefits to the multiplier farmers

The multiplier farmers were to benefit through exposure to new knowledge and skills in sustainable agriculture, food security and extension services. The question here was how sufficient were the benefits to the multiplier farmers to prompt their participation and was the effect likely to last. What relationship was there between how the farmers would benefit from the programme and their needs as reflected in the baseline enquiry? These issues were explored further in the second PAR cycle and are discussed in chapters eight and nine.

6.5.6 VEDCO's relationship with farmers as viewed by the extension workers

To extension workers, farmers were suffering from a dependency syndrome, all the time expecting free things from the NGO. This was partly true, given the history of war, destruction, displacement, deprivation and a long period of dependency on several donors during the years of resettlement the community had gone through (see section 4.1.2). Nevertheless, it was important for VEDCO to realise that having chosen to enter into a partnership with communities, they had to adhere to the principles of collaborative engagement, a factor that was still largely elusive in the relationship. VEDCO in many cases behaved like a father and a benefactor to the communities, characterised by a paternalistic and at times derogatory discourse by staff; referring to farmers as laggards, lazy, dependent, uncooperative, not understanding or spoilt.

6.6 ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW

Realising that most of the problems and challenges raised were external to the organisation and the individual, we also decided to conduct a more specific examination of the organisation and staff for possible weaknesses and problems by conducting an organisational review. We divided the group into two subgroups of management/administration and field workers. Each of the groups was given the task of identifying problems related to the implementation of the agriculture and food security programme, from a professional/personal/technical and administrative perspective.

6.6.1 Technical and administrative issues undermining programme implementation

- The use of demonstration as a technique had weaknesses ranging from biases in selecting demonstrators, to failure to stimulate farmers to transfer skills learnt into their daily farming activities.
- Some sustainable agricultural practices were found to be extremely cumbersome, discouraging most elderly and weak farmers, while less enthusiastic farmers used this as an excuse for not adopting new practices e.g. double digging, compost and trench making.
- Extension workers confessed to a lack of skills in community mobilisation and facilitation. They admitted they had enough technical knowledge and information on agriculture, but often had difficulties in effectively 'transferring' it to the farmers.

- Poor selection of farmers was associated with a lack of mobilisation skills among extension workers. This weakness tempted them to rely greatly on parish chairmen and overseers who had also not been appointed on merit.
- Extension workers also admitted to a lack of knowledge in farm business education. This was a major hindrance to the motivation of the learners as extension workers often failed to relate farming to income generation during training. Farmers, for example, demanded to be taught how to analyse the feasibility of their activities, including cost-benefit analysis and skills for budgeting. Extension workers did not possess these skills and they feared that the farmers would discover this lack.
- Extension workers also confessed their lack of knowledge and skills involved in agronomical practices of high value crops like okra, chillies and hot pepper. They were on high demand by farmers, but the field workers instead spent most of their time teaching about banana, coffee, vegetable and root-crops, about which they felt they had enough knowledge.
- These were important issues that were followed up later in the re-planning of the programme after the organisational review reported on in chapter seven.

Other problems raised could be categorised either as administrative or logistical:

6.6.2 Logistical constraints

- insufficient fuel for field work
- lack of casual labour at the field office
- insufficient motorcycles
- delays or failure to provide supplies required for field work
- lack of protective gear for riding motor bikes
- lack of demonstration kits
- lack of clear understanding of the organisational strategy by extension workers

6.6.3 Administrative issues

- poor planning leading to displacement of scheduled activities by unscheduled ones
- disorganisation of follow up schedules

- failure to deliver promised materials, such as planting materials for some farmers who had offered their land for use as demonstration gardens
- land for demonstration gardens

6.6.4 Problems as seen by managers and coordinators

Co-ordinators saw high targets set by VEDCO and her donor partners, particularly PLAN International, as a big obstacle to effectiveness and efficiency. The targets were many and had to be strictly adhered to if the funding of the activities was to continue. Coordinators complained that the donors did not consider the fact that VEDCO did not have full control over the communities and could not force them to implement things according to plan. This approach did not indicate an equal partnership between VEDCO donors and the community as it was purported to be, but rather that of a donor and some inferior recipients.

Lack of consistency in following up activities already started was a major contributor to the failure of programme activities. This was, according to staff, caused by among other factors internal administrative problems including: delays in releasing funds requisitioned for field activities; abrupt changes of programmes to respond to emergencies; and insufficient logistical organisation.

Coordinators also believed that the poor performance was partly due to a lack of what they called extension packages for farmers. The issue of 'packages' hinted at earlier surfaced again to confirm the technocratic disposition of the programme and the NGO actors.

6.6.5 Concluding comments

A number of issues related to the use of participatory implementation of the programme have emerged. The chapter represents the challenges of transition from a deep-rooted neoclassical education and development orientation to more participatory methods of work. Indeed it points at the gravity of work and commitment necessary, if the programme and the national environmental policy at large will be implemented in the expected participatory way. The problematic assumptions within the 'lead farmer' approach points at the underlying contradictions in the technicist notion of cascading down information. The chapter also reveals the limitations of the RDDA approach regardless of whether the baseline research to inform the programme makes use of participatory methods. The chapter reveals the complex dynamics that operate behind the façade of community 'homogeneity'. The central role of institutional

factors in influencing participatory programme implementation is also revealed. All these issues are important pointers to the gap and tension between the desired participatory processes, and the historical and practical experiences of the implementers. However, the realisation of the need to re-examine the footsteps was a step in the right direction. These issues revealed the gravity of the challenge ahead of VEDCO if the programme was going to yield the expected results within the set timeframe. In a way, the chapter sets the stage for a more careful and critical engagement with the complex community, institutional and occupational dynamics that characterise the realities of community-based programme implementation. It is this very challenge that we set out to address in a programme and institutional review and planning workshop reported on in chapter seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT ROLE DO ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS PLAY?

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of organisational factors in VEDCO's efforts to implement activities related to the Ugandan National Environmental policy at community level. The chapter explains the context of the organisation together with the underlying dynamics. Structurally, the chapter bridges the two main PAR cycles of the study and is the basis for the action discussed in chapter eight. The findings presented were generated in a six-day Review and Strategic Planning Workshop for VEDCO held from the 6th – 11th of August 2000. The workshop constituted a review of the PAR process, the results of which were to inform the next phase of action.

7.1 THE REVIEW AND STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

7.1.1 Background to the workshop

This workshop was held in the eighth month following the implementation of VEDCO's programme of sustainable agriculture and food security. It was a response to the issues identified in the internal reflection workshop discussed in chapter six, which had revealed that the internal climate of the organisation, the structure, ideology and expectations, deeply influenced the methods of work and character of programme outcomes. This convinced VEDCO to hold an in-depth review of the organisation, its goals, strategies and activities in order to refocus, re-plan and if necessary reset the entire vision, mission and strategy of the programme. A six-day staff retreat was organised to review the organisation, in particular its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Twenty-one participants including three top administrators, five programme coordinators, eleven extension workers, an external facilitator and myself attended the workshop.

It was agreed in the management meeting to hire an independent facilitator to lead the review process. The decision for an external facilitator was based on three factors:

- a) It had been realised during the internal review that for outcomes to be respected a neutral facilitator was necessary.

- b) An external facilitator was likely to be more objective in approaching the issues since such a person would not have a personal interest in organisational matters that would lead to bias.
- c) Some co-ordinators had reportedly harassed extension workers who had openly discussed critical issues in the internal reflection workshop, accusing them of a personal vendetta against them.

A consultant was identified and I worked with him to plan and organise the workshop.

The workshop had four specific objectives, namely:

1. To help staff understand the organisational vision, mission, objectives and three year strategic plan
2. to review the current organisational strategy, its strengths, constraints and how the current experiences could be used to implement new programmes
3. to identify the human resource gaps and skills needed to implement the programme
4. to plan future action from the outcomes of the review

7.1.2 Revisiting the vision and mission

We used the VIPP method to explore participants' understanding of the organisation's vision and mission. Using this method, the outcomes were analysed in a plenary session, identifying key concepts and terminology among other things.

Participants' knowledge of the organisational vision and mission was very limited. Apart from the Executive Director and two programme co-ordinators, the rest of the participants confessed total lack of knowledge of these whilst some learnt the concepts for the first time. This was not very surprising since many members of staff were new, and secondly, VEDCO's traditional mode of planning did not involve staff except at the implementation level. The facilitator thus decided to guide the group to define and clarify the two concepts of vision and mission.

The VIPP method was again used and the different views were collectively analysed and definitions derived. The group defined the vision as:

“The mental picture or dream of what an organisation aspires to become in a given period of time”.

The mission was defined as:

“The pathway/ways adopted by an organisation to achieve the vision”.

7.1.2.1 VEDCO's vision

Some participants felt that in its original form, the vision (see 5.2) sounded like a mission statement; leaving out the idea of a 'dream/mental picture' which, they felt, was central to the definition. The statement was thus refined to cover the dream element that was lacking in the original and to differentiate it from the mission statement. The refined vision read:

“An empowered community of smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs, capable of independently and efficiently mobilising and utilising available resources to meet their life-needs using sustainable means.”

7.1.2.2 The mission

While a number of participants agreed with the original mission statement (see 5.2), they saw it as too long and potentially confusing. The group decided to make it more precise thus:

“To ensure sustainable social and economic empowerment of smallholder farmers and micro-entrepreneurs through capacity building in sustainable agriculture, food security and farm enterprise management”

This was a valuable exercise in harmonising participants' understanding of VEDCO's vision and mission. But as I later realised, the outcome still represented the view of the organisation, while the expected change and transformation was to be observed in smallholder farmers who had not played any role in the development of the vision and mission statements. Hence, it was still the traditional 'doing for' approach, rather than the 'working with' intended in the environmental policy and VEDCO's programme. In essence, the vision and mission remained VEDCO's private affair; components of the organisation's technocratic development agenda while communities seemed only to act as sites venues for implementation.

7.1.3 Implication of the mission to different stakeholders

We sought to establish the implications of the mission statement for the different actors by breaking down its key concepts into indicators to be used in future assessment (see table 7.1). I found the different indicators revealing in a number of ways. For instance, while sustainable agriculture was one of the strategies for achieving sustainable economic empowerment, the main goal of the programme, the sustainability indicators, were devoid of any environmental and natural resource management element. This view of sustainability alludes to the underlying tension between economic and environmental goals of the organisation I broached in chapter five (see 5.4.2). Sustainability was largely defined in relation to economic issues that in fact outnumbered the social ones. Some of the issues categorised as social, were presented in a

way that depicted a strong economic bias, which testified to the underlying developmentalist²⁰ agenda informing practice. Issues like reduced dependency on the organisation, cost sharing on the part of the community, and decreased financial requests and donor dependency which are raised as social, are in fact economically inclined (see table 7.1).

²⁰ Mshana (1992:17) defines developmentalism as the reduction of the concept of development to the mere production of wealth by using science and technology, accompanied by a view that it is universally applicable and necessary for societies.

Table 7.1 Implications of the organisational mission statement for different stakeholders

Key concepts	organisation	Donor	Staff	Community
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -less donor dependency -people centred -well developed cash flows -effective monitoring and evaluation system -programme continuity -capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fewer demands for funds from NGO and communities -more internally generated resources for the NGO -institutional development -change strategy or lose jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cost effective -programme continuity -job security - well facilitated -professional growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -less donor dependency -increased participation -institutional development -ability to demand support services
Economic Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -demand driven services -cost effective activities -proper accountability -accessibility to resources -increased income generation -diversification of income sources -increased capacity to respond to partners needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -more capacity/self-reliance -cost effectiveness -cash-flow showing profitability and viability -increased return on investment - short term intervention - systems put in place - cost benefit analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -profit oriented -quality services -facilitated -participatory -satisfied, fewer complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -improved standard of living -improved household income -capacity to save and invest -aware of available opportunities and able to choose the most viable ones -diversification of household economic activities -can seek and use microfinance
Social Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -new services introduced and expansion to other areas -less intervention from NGO -work self out of job -demand driven services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reduce donor dependency -lose job -decreased financial requests with increased profits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -emancipated -able to deal with professional and personal challenges -positive attitude towards self and others -increased self esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -skilled individuals -less dependency on organisation -cost sharing -independent organisation/group formation and management

(Source DC 05 see table 3.1)

7.2 THE ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW

The purpose of the review was to re-examine the organisational strategy, its strengths, and constraints and how the experiences could be used to address future challenges in the programme. The first level of the review examined the extent to which the planned programme activities had been implemented and with what level of success. We did this by comparing the implemented programme activities against what was initially planned. It was followed by an in-depth discussion of the quality of the outcomes and problems encountered.

At the second level, the current state of the organisation and programme activities was critically examined. The aim was to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the organisation's bid to achieve its goals and ambitions. A SWOT analysis (see section 3.8.2.11) was used as the appropriate method because of its

perceived capacity to systematically explore the internal and external dimensions of any given programme, organisation or institution.

Each department was asked to examine itself. The groups did a step-by-step critical examination of each activity to identify the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

7.2.1 Extent of implementation

For the sake of this study, the results presented here are from sustainable agriculture and food security, and agriculture trade and marketing on which the study focused. The results include the actual outcomes of the SWOT analysis, and the issues that emerged during the process. The process-related issues were found to be very useful in typifying the organisational environment; in particular the prevailing social relations and the underlying dynamics.

7.2.1.1 Participants' views on implementation

Although the quantitative presentation of the results depicts a high level of achievement in some areas of the programme (see tables 7.2 and 7.3), the qualitative explanations, personal observations and outcomes of the SWOT analysis (see table 7.4) contradict these successes in a number of cases (see sections 7.2.2.1, 7.2.2.2, 7.2.2.3). The results also showed that the factors for success and failure in both cases were both internal and external to the organisation, alluding to the complex dynamics characterising the organisation and its activities. The tone of the presentation also connoted a technicist view of success, emphasising stark facts without giving due consideration to the underlying factors. Listening to the presentations by the different co-ordinators, one could not fail to notice the top-down managerialist²¹ discourse typical of government bureaucratic machinery often denoting power and authority over the situation and the people therein (see Box 7.1). Such a disposition was potentially detrimental to VEDCO's emancipatory agenda for it instead perpetuated the traditional bureaucratic relations the organisation had set out to deconstruct.

²¹ According to Boje D M (1999), managerialist behaviour involves looking at organisational behaviour and theory from the exclusive point of view of managers, the functional agents of an administered society. The role of managers as agents and functionalists is "to insure the survival growth/profitability of the organisation" and to "satisfy the immediate demands of shareholders/customers..."

Table 7.2 Extent of implementation of the SA and Food Security programme after six months

Planned activities	Achieved	Difference	Comment/Reason
Practical agricultural training workshops: - 2 in Katikamu - 1 in Bamunanika to cover 75 farmers	all practical agric workshops done with 75(100%) farmers, 29 women and 46 men.	None	-Funding was available -clear work plan - Right target group
Demonstration gardens on food security: - 8 in Katikamu - 4 in Bamunanika	All demonstration gardens set up as planned with a multiplier effect of 77 farmers.	None	-Staff commitment -community willingness -availability of logistical support
Farm-Business Education (FBE) w/shops - 1 in Katikamu - 1 in Bamunanika involving 50 farmers	All workshops conducted 100(200%) people attended, each contributed 1000 shillings ²²	50 more people attended	-High demand for FBE -Timely workshops -customised training - viability analysis
Enterprise awareness seminars with 720 farmers: - 24 in Katikamu - 24 in Bamunanika	All conducted but only 556(77%) farmers attended	164(23%) farmers	- April-June was rainy season, farmers chose to work on their farms - Unfulfilled promises by PLAN International ²³ .
Specialised mgmt of tradeable crops w/shops: - 1 in Katikamu - 1 in Bamunanika to cover 50 farmers	None	2 workshops not done	- Required logistics and materials not in place -No capacity in the organisation -Methodology and approaches not yet developed
Village-based demonstration gardens: - 3 in Katikamu - 5 in Bamunanika to cater for 120 farmers	Only 5 were set up, - 3 in Katikamu - 2 in Bamunanika But 183(152%) 63 more than the anticipated number of farmers participated	3 not done, but the numbers of participants surpassed those expected	-Farmers were more interested in being taught new things to use in their farming than setting demonstrations -There was more enthusiasm in the areas where FBE had been conducted

Source: DC 05 see table 3.1

²² Unlike the training in Sustainable agriculture and food security which was open to all interested farmers in the community, Farm business education was intended only for those farmers committed to transforming from subsistence to commercial farming. As a way of expressing that commitment, farmers were required to pay 1000 shillings (about 1\$) as part of the cost of running the workshop.

²³ Plan International, a partner organization with VEDCO, had promised to give farmers free coffee clones to replace their coffee dried by wilt disease, but only a few people got the promised coffee which angered and disappointed those who got none. Many such farmers shunned VEDCO activities and spread information tarnishing the image of the organization among those who had not yet joined the programme.

Table 7.3 Extent of implementation of the Agric Trade and Marketing programme

Planned Activities	Achieved	Difference	Comment/Reasons
12 meetings with stakeholders	Two meetings held	10 not held	Funds not provided
Market intelligence survey	-Survey tool drafted, - Subscription to news papers	Survey not yet done	-Funds and logistics not provided -Time not yet available
Development of pre & post harvest manual	-Consultant identified - T.O.R drafted	-Not yet developed	- Delayed funding
2 farmer needs analysis for a	1 done	1 not done	- Delayed funds
2 Demonstration gardens on mgmt of high value crops	-1 established for passion fruit	1 not yet established	Under budgeted
7000 seedlings to be produced in seven months from the nursery	- 6011 produced (86%)	989 (14%)	-Lack of grafting material for passion-fruits - High prevalence of fungal and viral diseases attacking mangoes
6000 seedlings to be sold in 7 months	4335(72%)	1665(28%)	-Poor marketing strategy ²⁴ , -seasonal patterns ²⁵
200 hundred farmers linked to markets for high value crops	79 (40%)	121(60%)	-Unreliable outlets leading to very low farmer recruitment
Technical advisory sessions for 80 export market-oriented farmers	118(147%) 38 more than the expected 80		Farmers producing for the local market requested to be included

Source: DC 05 see table 3.1

Results of the SWOT analysis of VEDCO's situation

The first level of the review did not sufficiently explore the contextual factors responsible for the situation as described. Participants concentrated on the quantitative indicators of progress with little attention to the related qualitative factors. In the second level we employed the SWOT analysis (see section 3.8.2.11) to engage in an in-depth exploration of the internal and external environment of the organisation. The analysis revealed a good number of aspects of VEDCO's character, as Table 7.4 illustrates.

²⁴ VEDCO did not go out aggressively to inform potential buyers about the availability of quality seedlings at its nursery.

²⁵ Seedlings could only be sold during the rainy season, but the initial production did not take this into account. They kept producing seedlings into the dry season most of which were not bought creating a big loss for the organisation. This was a fundamental error caused by poor planning and a possible lack of proper grasp of the local farming calendar, due to weaknesses in the 'participatory' baseline. The pressure to meet production and accountability targets to the donor also played a role in blinding the organization to local realities.

The views raised in the analysis also revealed contradictions in the organisation. The weaknesses and threats, as presented, outweigh the strengths and opportunities available. There were key contradictions about the funding, planning, staff enthusiasm and capacity, donor and NGO tensions and the greenhouse and nursery.

7.2.2.1 Funding

Ready funding was raised as a key strength, but complaints of delayed/slow release of funds, together with inadequate and poor staff facilitation raised by different staff categories contradict this. A number of planned activities were not accomplished either due to unavailability of funds or their belated release. In her presentation, one of the co-ordinators complained that she was being forced to pay more people than the programme was officially supposed to pay.

.Table 7.4 SWOT outcomes for SA and Food security, and Agric Trade and Marketing by VEDCO staff

Programme	Whose View	Strengths	Weaknesses	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<u>Sustainable Agriculture and food security</u>	<i>Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -New qualified staff²⁶ recruited -Staff are enthusiastic -Customised farm business manuals developed - Capable extension team - Ready funding - Clear targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delayed funds to implement activities -Inadequate facilitation of staff -Ever changing programmes -Too many demands from extensionists -Relief mentality among farmers -Too many extensionists on the the programme putting pressure on resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Availability of training opportunities -Good will of local leaders - Farmers' good will -Political infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Other NGOs giving free handouts -Dependency on donor funds -Dependency on natural weather seasons
	<i>Field staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collective responsibility -Good will of farmers -We have weekly meetings to share experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unplanned activities interfering with normal work schedules - Slow process for releasing funds -Lack of exposure to successful programmes -Poor facilitation- fuel not given on time -Motorcycles are not enough -Farmers take long to adapt -no proper job description, -Improper co-ordination with immediate bosses -Poor communication methods by co-ordinators -Delay of funds requisitioned for -Rudeness of coordinators - Conflict among managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Receptive farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No job security for extension staff -Working under threats and fear of being laid off
<u>Agric trade and marketing</u>	<i>Management and field staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Presence of the nursery and green house for propagating seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Erratic flow of logistics and inputs, -limited access to reliable market information, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strategic location -Good climate and soils -Collaboration with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor terms of trade -Poor physical infrastructure

²⁶ The organisation had just recruited two graduate programme officers, and five extension workers. All the extension workers were fresh graduates from agricultural colleges with diplomas in agriculture and natural resource management.

Programme	Whose View	Strengths	Weaknesses	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Skilled staff - Availability of essential inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -poor out reach to farmers, -Inadequate and unreliable market outlets and buyers, -Poor team spirit, -Poor quality of grafted seedlings during hot season, -Dependence on market season -Poor marketing strategy -Inadequate staff facilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other institutions and organisations like Kawanda Agricultural Research Institute KARI, IDEA project, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fluctuating prices -Low effective demand for VEDCO products -destructive weather e.g. hailstones and storms

Source: VEDCO Strategic Review and Planning workshop Report

It is true I know the number of staff I should be working with on the programme, but I have often had problems. I plan for the number of staff I know, for example 3, but to find myself being told to have 5 on board. And people want me to satisfy their demands because they don't know what I am facing. "They haven't given us our salary, our lunch" and you realise that on the programme each activity caters for one or two people. So when I have 5 that means I am over-stretching the programme.

There were similar concerns in the agribusiness department. The nursery and greenhouse for seed propagation were seen as key strengths, but this was undermined by the unreliable flow of inputs and logistics, plus inadequate and unreliable market outlets. On a number of occasions, production work stalled for lack of basic items like grafting materials, polythene paper for covering grafted seedlings and ready compost.

These problems deflate the stated ready availability of funds as a key strength and raise questions about the claim that resources were available. This anomaly appeared to suggest underlying managerial weaknesses although these issues seemed to have been carefully avoided by most workshop participants.

7.2.2.2 Extension staff enthusiasm and capacity

While extension workers were hailed for being enthusiastic, capable and qualified, the same management accused them of being too demanding and too many. Interestingly, the problem was apparently neither the number of the extension staff, nor the gravity of their demands, but most likely related to the limited nature of the resources or an implied mismanagement. For apart from the demand for lunch while on duty, which was also necessary, none of the demands were for anybody's personal gain. The other demands like protective gear for riding motorbikes, rain-coats and irregular and insufficient supply of petrol for field visits were meant to improve staff efficiency and effectiveness.

7.2.2.3 'Good Planning'

Good planning was stated as a key strength of the organisation reflected in the claim of 'clear activity plans and targets' but like others, its value was lost in the erratic methods of work adopted by the NGO. Both co-ordinators and staff consistently complained of 'ever changing programmes', and 'abrupt unplanned activities' (also see section 7.3.1) interfering with normal work schedules. The interference was hindering the smooth implementation of activities and as a result members of staff were getting frustrated and embarrassed in the communities as the dialogue in Box 7.1 shows. The 'strict targets' and 'clear deadlines' considered a strength were

also revealed as sources of undue pressure on staff and the community, resulting in failure to achieve results and bad working relations within the organisation.

Box 7.1 VEDCO's erratic methods of work

Ext 3: Maybe I can explain, there are days when one comes to the office prepared to go to the field straightaway and when you reach the site they tell you certain other programmes which have to be done. You find yourself not going to the field, yet most of the time you have already drawn up a programme with the farmers in the field. I remember one time because a donor was coming; we were given some abrupt work to finish before going to the field and it became very hard for us to go to the field. What makes it worse is that it is so abrupt that you cannot make any contingency plan for your farmers

ED: What is the problem there?

Facilitator: Planning

Ext 2: I think I can also say something. Normally in the field we meet groups and these groups have their own calendars/programmes to follow. Say "if you have to meet group A at 9.00 a.m. to transplant cabbages, that means I will go to the field late at around maybe midday. By the time you reach the farmers you are tired and the farmers themselves are tired. They often say you have come late and even some have already gone home". That is the kind of interruption we are talking about, I think.

Ext 3: I think that morning-work is also a problem, because before you go to the field you must first do that morning-work at the field office, because the Programme officer had said that the labour at the site is not enough requiring us to do the work of casual labourers before going to the field at around 10.00 am. This is not fair it tires us even before we can start our official day.

Coming late and untimely changes of plans and activities were often mentioned during community meetings as VEDCO's outstanding weaknesses²⁷. Whilst such happenings could be attributed to a number of factors, my own observation was that VEDCO did not consider the communities as equal partners. The feeling was that the community could always be made to understand by a simple apology or explanation.

There was also disharmony between the plans and agendas of NGO management, the donor and the implementing staff, largely due to lack of participation. The fact that the implementing members of staff were mere employees hired to do the job of the organisation put them in a tricky situation. They could not freely participate in the decision-making processes as they had expected, thus being denied access to relevant information. Many of the essential decisions

²⁷ I experienced such in one of the meetings where due to delays in the arrival of VEDCO headquarters staff we arrived at the venue four hours late with most of the people gone. However, they had discussed the problems hindering the success of programmes in our absence and mentioned VEDCO's lateness and failure to honour commitments as problem number one. What was embarrassing was that when we arrived we found these discussions well laid-out on the blackboard for us to see, and all participants eagerly watching to see our

with direct influence on the activities in the field were often made by top management and relayed later to field staff for implementation. The situation as I observed it represented a paradoxical scenario whereby people were given responsibilities to execute, but lacked adequate power to carry them out. Management was often not willing to make compromises as far as meeting targets was concerned. The only language understandable to management was a language of 'concrete results' achieved, and extension workers had to do that to prove their worth. The extension workers in such a situation were reduced to tools responding to commands and executing them as expected.

Erratic actions affected VEDCO's operations in many ways. The community began losing confidence and doubting the seriousness of the organisation's commitment. Internally, it put extension workers in the precarious situation of having to explain to the community and at times create stories to save the face of the organisation. The achievement of positive results became very difficult under such circumstances. One of the extension workers expressed this during an interview in the later stages of the study. He said,

I have observed in the recent past we have failed to fully implement our part of the plans due to logistical problems in the organisation and farmers have always expressed their concern about our failure to fulfil our part of the plan. Follow-up has been poor and finally when we return to farmers we find they have tried to implement things their way, and often the wrong way, because they have not been guided. When they see you they apologise and say, 'you see we waited for you to come and the season was almost ending when we did not see you we did it our way'. (Ext 1)

Inconsistencies pointing to the contradictory dynamics in the organisational set-up and operations were reflected throughout the workshop and emerged as key obstacles to the implementation of VEDCO's programmes and indirectly to the environmental policy concerns at community level.

7.2.3 Tensions between commercial and social interests

There were two dominant attitudes, one overtly paternalistic and another commercial/economic. The commercial dimension was frequently echoed in the discourse employed particularly by management. While, in principle, VEDCO was working with communities and groups as partners, sharing the agenda and interests, the reality exhibited both in the language and interactions was different. Throughout the workshop, management

embarrassment. We were at a loss, with the only option to apologise, which did not seem to make much sense to the community.

referred to partner communities, groups and individuals as either 'clients' or 'customers'. This was incompatible with the principles of participatory learning/development (Freire 1970). Commercial relationships, unlike social ones, are 'commodity relationships', not based on goodwill and common social purpose, but on market demands that may never survive beyond economic vagaries of the time. In my view, subjecting a socially rooted programme to economic goals and principles undermined its capacity to sustain itself beyond the economic challenges of the time, yet commerce and income generation are subsets of social development. In this way, VEDCO was undermining the very principles it had initiated and the foundation upon which it had built for over a decade (see sections 8.8.5 and 9.6.2).

7.2.3.1 The irony of paternalism and dependency

Staff attitudes towards the community swayed between paternalism and disrespect. To some VEDCO staff, including mid-level managers and some extension workers, the community was part of the problem rather than the solution; communities were accused of harbouring a 'dependency syndrome', inherited from the long history of receiving subsidies as part of the post war recovery programmes (see historical context in Ch.4 & 5). The feelings of the entire group were neatly summarised in a statement by one of the co-ordinators:

There is the dependency syndrome among the community, you realise we are working with people who have been getting free things from Plan International and changing this mentality has really cost us some time, and sometimes we have to take long in the field explaining why they need to depend on their resources. So that is one of the problems we are having and we hope to overcome.

The same co-ordinator later added,

We need to report the targets very fast, but farmers are moving at their own pace and you know those laggards...

Two important observations can be made here about the discourse and the reality of the issues raised by these views. The language used by the co-ordinator is not innocent; it is loaded with a tone of superiority, elevating the NGO to the level of a saviour and a benefactor while reducing the community to a pathetic ignorant lot, always explained to, but never understanding. Clearly denigrating adjectives like: lazy, slow adopters and laggards are used to describe the community. These accusations were often based on the individual impressions of staff, which might cast some doubt on their validity.

At another level, although dependency might be a genuine development problem, one wonders whether VEDCO has the moral authority to criticise the community for it. VEDCO is probably more of a victim of the same syndrome than the poor farmers, as the facilitator once intimated

If we are to take it that farmers take long to adopt, which I largely believe is true, which line do we take in tackling this, change our proposal? Ask *'our parent' the donor* to allow us more time so that they can adopt or what do we do?

This heralds both the plight of donor-funded programmes and the depth of the dependency relationship involved. Referring to the donor as 'a parent', tells a lot about NGO dependency on the donor. Dependency is a much bigger problem, affecting people at different levels differently. While communities expect material support to supplement their battle for day-to-day survival, VEDCO's entire survival is dependent on donor support, hence the sarcastic metaphor of the 'parent'.

7.2.3.2 Relationship between VEDCO and donors

The dependency of the NGO on donor funds was a critical, disempowering factor in several ways. By depending on donor funding VEDCO's position as a partner was eroded. This meant that the power to make appropriate decisions was also reduced; donors' interests had always to be incorporated and at times overshadowed local interests as later discussions show. The scenario was worsened as VEDCO had multiple donors (see 5.3). Different donors had different and at times contradictory demands and agendas some of which conflicted with VEDCO's own, and in such circumstances, VEDCO the 'lesser partner' had to accommodate them at its own expense. The shift from VEDCO's original social agenda to a more commercial one is testimony to this. As a poor indigenous organisation, VEDCO found itself changing its principles and goals to keep within the funding framework of the donors. The threat of losing funding cowed the NGO into obedience to even unrealistic or inappropriate demands.

VEDCO was always under pressure to be accountable to the donors so that the donors also could account to those funding them. This was a good principle but the context-insensitive pressure used and the power relations involved could be detrimental. VEDCO was often literally bullied by threats of fund withdrawal or non-release in 'the next quarter'; this pushed its management to put pressure on staff who in turn pressurised the partners in the community, who might end up undertaking activities not necessarily because they understood them, but because the NGO wanted them done.

I also had the opportunity to participate in a joint NGO - donors meeting where the progress of programmes and future collaboration were discussed. This was a great learning moment for me regarding the thinking and attitude of some donors towards their local partners and their limited understanding of local context. I was at the same time able to realise the plight of the donors, themselves, 'beggars' from either home governments or other financial and development institutions. In relation to the nature of programme indicators, and the NGO's suggestion for more long-term, qualitative indicators of programme impact at community level, one donor representative kept arguing: "How do we convince the tax payers at home with such indicators? You know this is taxpayers' money!" Another donor could not comprehend why entire villages had not been transformed and he kept asking, "why are only a few farmers changing? Why is the whole village not like these few farmers? Do you mean they just refuse to respond? What have you not done to them?"

7.2.3.3 Complexity of sustainable agriculture as a development intervention

The group discussed the complexity of smallholder agriculture as a development intervention for poor communities and the need for a unique approach and understanding by NGO implementers and donors. In the case of VEDCO's programme, many things were apparently taken for granted. The character of the farmers and the material conditions under which they live were, for example, glossed over. Key environmental factors like weather and the seasonality of farming were either ignored or dismissed as irrelevant, despite resources spent on a reportedly participatory baseline study on which the programme was founded. This was evident in the way seminars and workshops for farmers were organised at the wrong times (see 8.3.1).

As indicated in the foregoing discussions, VEDCO and the donors expected the farmers to immediately adopt new skills and knowledge so as to meet their targets. This confirmed the view that despite the NGO's rhetoric on community-based participatory implementation, in reality the technocratic agenda reigned supreme. Farmers' failure to adopt new skills was seen as a big blow to the programme and often blamed on farmers or extension workers' lack of vigilance. To top management, training of farmers had to automatically result in implementation/adoption and if not, the responsible staff would have to explain. The quotation from one of the top managers brings this out vividly:

What we all want is to succeed, but remember the management by results. When the organisation invests resources it expects nothing but results. We don't want to hear that you should be given 20 years to work and produce results when they should be

got in one year or three years. That is why we have targets, we have plans, we also get together to discuss and come up with good results

The above view contradicted the common understanding of the implementing staff, including myself, who had been closely engaged in the implementation process and had realised the importance of patience when pursuing permanent results. Nevertheless it gave other participants directly involved in implementation the opportunity to put things straight and to challenge this way of thinking. One programme officer explained:

I want to point out that our programmes should be run in a way that we give room to that because I think that most of us are aware. It is not new that farmers take long to adopt. It lies in the sensitivity that if one is told to run a programme with farmers he/she is tempted to want the farmer to be there waiting for him at all times yet, the farmer has a right to choose day one or day two to work with you and give some allowance. Sometimes the farmer may not have the time for you.

Still on the issue of adoption and production of results, the facilitator raised an important factor worth mentioning here. He argued that while it is true that agricultural programmes take long to achieve results, it is also true that implementers often fail to assess their own capacities and design programme objectives that impress donors but are largely untenable.

The problem is that, possibly we over-assume and over-estimate our capacity. But I think the origin of this is because most of these programmes have a short life span. And we often start to say at the end of the year adoption rate is supposed to be so much. Such objectives can be suicidal to the organisation because we commit ourselves and in the end we cannot fulfil our commitments. So I am saying we should be careful as we set our objectives and organisational goals!!

This is a direct challenge to the instrumentalist view of education that insists on behavioural objectives even where the material conditions on the ground warrant different approaches and expectations.

7.3 WORKING CONDITIONS FOR VEDCO STAFF

Extension workers were not satisfied with their working conditions. They described the conditions as 'de-motivating and frustrating at the personal and professional level'.

7.3.1 Professional hiccups

Extension workers had worked for over six months with neither appointment letters, nor job descriptions, yet they were expected to 'create an impact' in the field. The explanation given for this scenario left many unanswered questions. It was, for example, explained that new

extension workers did not have appointment letters because they were 'volunteers'. This according to the extension workers was not true, because they were not told so when they were being employed. The reasons for lack of job descriptions for extension workers were also vague and unconvincing as expressed in the words of one manager:

But the general extension programme must have its work plan and these people had to continue working, somehow they had to find a way, there was a structural problem, the job descriptions have not been presented up to-date, they were designed and kept in files, I don't know what could be the actual problem but I think it is a management problem.

This was a vague response neither explaining, nor solving the problem of the lack of job descriptions for extension staff, let alone offering any clear redress.

7.3.2 Logistics

Inadequate and often delayed logistics in particular with regard to fuel, which they said was often not enough, irregular and given at the wrong time were also raised as big constraints to programmes. Only two of the three available functional motorbikes could be used among five extension workers due to fuel problems, regardless of the wide geographical area covered by extension workers (see Box 7.2). Extension workers were expected to work for more than eight hours a day without lunch and transport to and from work. Such administrative inadequacies were raised as key obstacles to the effective implementation of the planned activities.

Box 7.2 Typical logistical hiccups

You go to the office early, knowing that by 9.00 am you will have begun working, but you end up getting the coupons for petrol at around 1.00 pm, and then one leaves for the field at around 2.00 pm. By the time you reach the field, farmers have already left the gardens and are doing other things, yet our work is basically in the farmers' gardens. When you return, you are expected to account for the fuel in terms of activity reports, but how does one report when you have actually not done the work as expected? At times the petrol is even not enough for the distance, what makes it worse is that this petrol is given on a daily basis, so we have to repeat the same experience almost every day for a whole week. Motorcycles are not enough, we are five on this project but we have three motorcycles between us and currently we are only using two of them because fuel is not enough for the three motorbikes. This means we have to use two motorbikes to cover four parishes, everybody sees this but no one seems to appreciate our problem. Instead the organisational expectations remain unchanged

Source: Extract from a tape recording of workshop proceedings

7.3.3 Poor personal relations

At the personal level, mistreatment of extension workers was reported. They felt they were not accorded the recognition they deserved; yet the image of the organisation depended on their work in the community. According to extension workers, coordinators were rude, often using

threats and insults while giving instructions. Cases like the one below were quoted as examples of rudeness:

I was three days old here when I met two members of staff quarrelling, and they were quarrelling bitterly, I was a bit discouraged and I wondered! Is this the situation I have to operate in? One of them shouted at the other 'I am not as cheap as you' then I said to myself who is expensive and who is not? Actually we all have families, we are all responsible people, and how can you call a colleague cheap? Is it because of the books one reads or the dress she puts on?

Manual work meant for casual labourers was imposed on extension workers, which to them was another form of humiliation and exploitation. Retrenchment threats to the extension workers in particular were also common, as they often put it '*tujja kubatemako*' (*we shall lay you off.*) While these could have been isolated occurrences, it is difficult to avoid relating them to the refusal to give extension workers official appointment letters and the absence of job descriptions.

On analysing the above accusations we isolated four possible causes including:

- Differences in educational levels, with all co-ordinators being university graduates while extension workers were largely diploma and certificate holders
- Inadequate staff training/orientation in community/social work including the essential methods and approaches in participatory work. (The extension workers confessed this on a number of occasions)
- Failure on the part of the organisation to nurture an organisational working culture based on a clear set of organisational principles and values, above personal interests
- Absence of a clear structure for communication and a forum for various categories of staff to freely interact and share ideas and experiences.

These issues were picked up as areas to be addressed in the subsequent programme and included in the action plan.

7.3.4 Communication

The value of communication in shaping the internal and external environment in an organisation cannot be overstated. There was evidence that the method of communication in VEDCO was flawed in certain circumstances, thus failing to nurture the anticipated participatory culture and at times deeply complicating the dynamics. The flow of information was largely one-way, from top management to different levels of staff and lastly the community. According to the extension workers, co-ordinators consistently used the name of the executive director as a

cover for whatever information they wanted to pass on to field workers, as one of them complained,

We are having a problem with the co-ordinators most times when we have meetings they say “*ED yagambye*” (**the ED has said**) instead of discussing issues as they are, they just say “*ED yagambye*” even when it is themselves saying. They don’t guide us, instead of sitting down and we discuss, **they just order** and some of the things you can see they won’t work but they insist *ED yagambye* and so **because ‘we fear’ the ED we have to do it**. It is always their first word the ED has said you are supposed do ABC...Co-ordinators cannot communicate anything without referring to the ED. To us extensionists, it looks like a way of blackmailing and intimidating us to do what they want us to do without challenging them.

Realising the extent of this problem, the facilitator decided to explore the issue further to characterise it and identify the underlying causes. Interestingly, the staff concerned did not deny their behaviour but instead tried to explain it, as illustrated by the dialogue in Box 7.3.

(Box 7.3) Communication and disempowerment

ED: But do we have examples where we have ‘*ED yagambye*’ because I am interested to know why such a thing happens

Facilitator: I think for me, I am just imagining, who ever said or says it at one point, it is because **managers feel disempowered**. I just looked today when these people were presenting this thing. Manager is put in a comma and every body is direct to the **ED**. I think this is happening,

Co-ordinator 1: It is true this kind of thing is happening and when that person uses such a word, maybe he means ‘well I don’t have the capacity, let me use the name where people will respond without question.

ED: No. No. No. Please, I think we have to respect each other and take responsibility for our work because as the **ED** I have my own work and I am paid for that, but as a manager you should take responsibility, you know if you are supposed to pass a message get a way to communicate to your subordinates and get things moving other than saying you see... Why do you hide behind me so that we don’t know the problem and yet you have a problem yourself?

Co-ordinator 2: I think you are very correct, but I think it also comes when you are trying to convey a message to the subordinate then he tells you point blank that what you are saying is wrong, that is why one decides to use the ED’s name, that ‘the ED has said’.

ED: No, you tell him let us do this. I think we should do this, let us arrange, can we find a way of handling this issue or what are you saying about this matter? How do we do it?

Coordinator 2: Let me give an example, I come to the nursery, I find a lot of weeds growing among the plants and I tell the people I work with, please why aren’t these plants weeded? They say, for me I have a lot of work, you see, I don’t even have casual labourers to help. You say before we get any kind of help we need to show that we can do what we can and then we shall look for external assistance after we have failed. Then he says for me I think I can’t, even if the ED came here I would tell him that I have a labour problem and I am not going to weed those plots. So, you as the co-ordinator you start wavering and you try to show this person that he should do the work I think we have been having a problem I think from January we have not been having meetings. I think those issues would have come in those meetings but didn’t take place.

Co-ordinator 3: Excuse me sir, when we are discussing this thing let us also be aware that down there we have people who feel they are closer to the ED than us co-ordinators. So co-ordinators at times feel that if they use that phrase ‘*ED yagambye*’, the man or woman will fear and respond positively. I therefore feel this closeness to the ED by some people is also a major problem.

Source: Extract from a tape recording of the workshop proceedings

This dialogue reveals some key weaknesses within the organisation that needed addressing:

- a) Disempowerment among different managers responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisational programmes
- b) Possible over-centralisation of power and authority in the hands of the executive director
- c) Lack of confidence among co-ordinators
- d) Inadequate communication skills and
- e) Poor managerial ethics.

These issues were included among the key issues for consideration when drawing up the new action plan and are discussed further in chapter eight.

7.4 POWER AND DISEMPOWERMENT

The workshop revealed the power situation in the organisation through the style of communication. A strong sense of power and authority was evident in the language of the top executive, while one could also clearly notice a sense of disempowerment exhibited by the lower levels of staff, especially the extension workers and the programme officers. The style of communication by the top executive, in particular the words and tone of voice, were often intimidating and potentially disempowering as evidenced in one such communication:

Excuse me, P last time was complaining about having a problem of interference into her duties by finance, if you refuse to talk about it now I won't give you a chance again, and next time you are not able to produce results I don't know what reason you will give because now we are trying to raise the problems so that we try to reach solutions. If I think we should address your concern and you don't come up and tell us what your problems are you are putting us in a difficult position coming up with solutions.

This autocratic tone was evident in most of the communication from top executive and in a way contradicted the organisation's participatory policy and was a fertile ground for breeding fear and tension among staff. Phrases like "is there any other issue that affects 'officers' like 'insubordination' by staff", "It is the 'weakness of farmers', don't think you 'go to him' today and 'tell him' do this and he would do it...", "I have to do a 'lot of pushing'," and many others of a top down nature dominated the discussions. Similar autocratic utterances like "*I don't buy the idea of being given responsibility and you end up failing to execute it claiming that there is no job description*". The use of terms like 'officers', 'telling', 'insubordination', 'pushing', 'I can't buy the idea' reflected a bureaucratic top-down management style that contradicted the principles of participatory management and the spirit of collective problem-solving. The use of ED, as a

name for the executive director was another indication of the extent to which power had been concentrated in him. The person in the executive director had effectively disappeared into the job title and the authority that went with it.

The above situation exposes the difficulties of creating an empowering environment in situations that are historically autocratic. While VEDCO looked forward to facilitating communities to become empowered, the organisation itself was more in need of emancipation than probably the communities. VEDCO needed to redeem itself from the technocratic managerialist approach that had bred autocracy and disempowerment within the organisation. This would include revisiting the hierarchical power structures responsible for the reproduction of autocratic tendencies and the perpetuation of powerlessness among employees. The relationship between donors/VEDCO was also equally responsible for the perpetuation of skewed power relations among themselves, VEDCO management, staff and the communities and any attempt at empowerment and emancipation that did not address the donor question was bound to fail.

7.5 PLAN OF ACTION

At the end of the workshop, participants collectively developed an action plan as a blue print for the organisation's way forward. Below are some of the sections of the plan I considered relevant to the study. Briefly we agreed on the following actions:

1. To train all VEDCO staff in participatory learning and action methods and approaches
2. To conduct a comprehensive situation analysis study of VEDCO's partners using participatory methodology
3. Base all future activities on concrete information reflecting the material conditions of the community
4. Involve communities at all levels of programme development and implementation, using PRA methodology
5. Use the farmers' garden as the demonstration area instead of the communal demonstration gardens
6. Start farmer exchange visits
7. Let community participate in setting targets

8. Let people participate in developing the criteria for the selection of lead farmers and the actual selection process
9. Streamline the reporting procedures
10. Decentralise the control of operational funds from the head office to the field office (with a full-time accountant to handle field funds requisitions)

Concluding comments

My main purpose in this chapter was to illustrate how factors within VEDCO influenced the implementation of the organisation's aims relating to Uganda's environmental policy. I hoped to achieve this through an intensive review of the organisation, specifically the internal and external climate, to identify the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The results were to guide the future of the programme and act as the basis for subsequent actions and decisions. The review has among other things demonstrated that there were several contradictory situations within and outside the organisation that militated against the smooth implementation of the programmes. Internal administrative dynamics, for instance, undermined the available strengths in the form of a ready supply of resources and staff expertise. Technocratic tendencies in planning and day-to-day management organisational affairs did not only disempower staff, but also contradicted the organisation's confessed participatory agenda and the associated emancipatory outcomes. Other weaknesses like poor communication skills, dependency culture both among the communities and the organisation, negative attitude towards the community, erratic methods of work, and tensions between the commercial and social interests of the organisation contributed a great deal to the dismal performance of the organisation. The above notwithstanding, the fact that the organisation took a bold step to examine itself is a positive step. We have also observed through the nature of the discussion and the emerging issues, that professional growth and empowerment through critical reflection on one's methods of work is possible. In line with this view, on several occasions staff considered lowest in the organisational ladder raised their voices and challenged injustice without fear. The decisions to redo the situation analysis, to train staff in participatory methods and use them in all future programme activities reflected steps in the right direction. In the final analysis, this review marked a new beginning in the life of the organisation as shown in chapter eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE TWO: RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES

8.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents results of the second major Participatory Action Research cycle. The cycle represents a major action phase following the reflection during the organisational review and planning workshop discussed in chapter seven. In many respects, this cycle is a response to the issues and concerns that emerged from the review and planning workshop, although it also reports on a number of other issues that emerged during the implementation of the new programme.

8.1 THE REORIENTATION PHASE

The purpose of this phase was to reorient old staff and introduce new ones to the concepts and practices of participatory learning and action methodology and to prepare to redo the situation analysis. During this phase, two specialised training programmes in Participatory Learning and Action methodology (PRA/PLA) and agricultural enterprise development were organised.

8.1.1 PRA/PLA training

The review and planning workshop recommended all VEDCO staff to be trained in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods in order to undertake a participatory implementation of the programme. I was requested to organise a two week PRA/ PLA workshop for the entire workforce of the organisation. VEDCO felt it necessary to train all staff, regardless of their designation, to enable them appreciate organisational interests, commitments and concerns. Two specialists in participatory methodologies were engaged to conduct the training with me. In September 2000, together with two PLA/PRA consultants, we developed a training programme and we were also mandated to guide the re-run of the situational analysis. The overall objective of the training was to provide VEDCO staff with comprehensive field-based experience in the use of participatory methods, in particular, PRA (Babikwa and Ndidde 2000). The training was also intended to orient participants to work in rural agrarian contexts like the one VEDCO was operating using participatory methods.

A total of twenty-four participants participated in the ten-day workshop. They included all the extension workers, the programme coordinators and newly recruited administrative staff. We adopted an Action-training/learning model, a participatory hands-on training process that uses participants' field experiences as the raw material for new learning. The mornings were spent at VEDCO field office where the theoretical and conceptual issues of PRA were introduced and discussed and the afternoons in the field, practicing the PRA tools, ideas and concepts introduced in the morning.

8.1.2 Training in participatory methods for agricultural enterprise development

The PRA training was supplemented with more training in 'agricultural enterprise development' to equip staff with the relevant skills in that vital component of the programme. This ten-day training course was provided by ACDI/VOCA²⁸ an international organisation specialising in agricultural enterprise management contracted by VEDCO. The training was divided into two parts, part one dealt with detailed technical knowledge in the management of different agricultural enterprises and part two focussed on community-based participatory facilitation skills.

8.2 A RE-RUN OF THE SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The review discussed in chapter seven recommended that the situational analysis be redone (see section 7.5) to address the weaknesses in the earlier baseline study. In the earlier baseline study (see sections 5.4, 5.4.1, 5.4.2), participatory methods had been used in a technocratic manner to extract information from the communities. This had denied the community the opportunity to engage in all processes of programme planning and development and implementation and in turn undermined the drive towards community empowerment. This situation analysis also purposed to explore the socio-economic and environmental aspects of the community, and to identify the factors undermining people's ability to address their developmental concerns. It was also intended to gain insight into the communities' view(s) of VEDCO's activities.

²⁸ Agricultural Co-operation Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Co-operative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA) is an international non-profit organisation that promotes broad-based economic growth and the development of civil society in developing countries. The organisation does capacity building in business, agricultural systems, grass-root organisations and financial systems. VEDCO sought ACDI/VOCA technical expertise to assist staff in developing develop skills in farm business education.

A team of five people, including the four co-ordinators and me was set up to lead the situation analysis process. Together with the rest of the field staff, we developed guidelines to be followed during the analysis. We also decided on the composition of the PRA teams, selected sites and liaison persons in each of the communities, distributed responsibilities, determined the required resources and ensured that they were available before the process started.

We constituted ourselves into two PRA teams, each composed of four extension workers, three part-time research assistants, a team leader and an assistant. The assistants in both teams were programme officers in VEDCO. Each of the groups was to work with three communities spending six complete days with each community. In all, we had six communities, namely: Kiteme, Kibiriizi, Kikoma, Musaale, Migadde, and Bbajjo.

The information generated from the situation analysis was of two types, namely:

- a) Baseline information on the socio-economic and environmental situation (part of which has been used in chapter four to describe the community context, (see sections 4.2, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.3); and
- b) Communities' views about VEDCO and its programmes, in particular the existing gaps and challenges that needed to be addressed. These findings are presented in sections 8.2.1, 8.2.1.1, 8.2.1.2, 8.2.1.3, 8.2.1.4.

8.2.1 Some outcomes of the re-run situational analysis

Using the VIPP idea card method (see section 3.8.2.8), focus group discussions and individual interviews, we were able to generate vital information about VEDCO's previous activities in the district. Findings from the different communities indicated that sustainable agriculture as implemented by VEDCO had weaknesses that made its implementation difficult.

8.2.1.1 Wrong crops promoted

The crops promoted for food security and income generation had been decided on by VEDCO without the farmers' participation. In other words, VEDCO had imposed its own ideas of food security and viable agricultural projects for income generation on the people. According to some farmers, the bananas, root crops (cassava, coco yams, yams and other tubers) and coffee VEDCO was promoting for food security and income generation did not represent the

current thinking and realities of the community. The training on food and cash crops promoted for food security and income generation had not introduced any new ideas that would constitute a fundamental change in the lives of the people. They wanted something new, and challenging, to turn around the economic and food security situation of the community.

8.2.1.2 VEDCO's concept of food security contested

Farmers disagreed with VEDCO's view that interpreted food security in terms of the presence of physical food either in the garden or in the store. They argued that it was neither the physical presence of gardens nor food in the store that assured a household of food security. They gave examples of fellow farmers who always had food in gardens, but would sell it for cash and in no time rendered their families food insecure. Likewise, there were those who did not necessarily farm, but had enough money to feed their families. Food security therefore referred to the capacity of an individual or household to cater for family food requirements as long as the food sources were not illegitimate and destructive to the environment.

8.2.1.3 The privileged position of coffee challenged

While, in VEDCO's original plan, coffee was an essential crop for income generation, many farmers disagreed as to whether the crop still deserved that status. Older farmers in their fifties and sixties talked about it with a deep sense of nostalgia, referring to its former glory as a source of school fees, money for building and "a poor man's permanent bank account and pension". The younger and some older farmers felt the opposite; they saw the crop as a source of frustration for many people in the recent past. The market was unreliable and the wilt disease was continuing to destroy all the mature coffee plants during their prime production period. The character of clonal coffee, which was being promoted as a replacement for the disease-prone Robusta, was also questioned. While it was preferred for its assumed resistance to the wilt and quick maturing, compared to Robusta, farmers complained that it was vulnerable to hot and dry weather conditions. It needed more water in the soil than the traditional Robusta. Farmers argued that if they were going to farm clonal coffee they would need irrigation at some stage in the course of the year, but they did not have the capacity to irrigate. Even if such capacity was available, irrigation has long been associated with many negative environmental impacts where it has been used for long periods (Conway 1991, Pretty 1995).

8.2.1.4 Flaws in the original programme strategy

Farmers disagreed with VEDCO's original training strategy. They said the training was generalised and treated them as if they were all interested in the same things. One farmer commenting on it said "VEDCO gave the same dose of every-thing to all its patients as if all of them had the same ailment". Farmers wanted knowledge and skills to enhance their capacity to produce, but such knowledge had to be in line with their individual interests or groups with similar interests. It was suggested that future programmes would yield better results by focusing on the specific needs and interests of specific groups rather than the entire community. This became the principle that guided all subsequent programme activities.

The use of village-based lead farmers as local resource persons was seen as a good idea, which had been wrongly implemented. In all six PRA sessions I attended, farmers complained about some of the trained lead farmers. They were accused of lack of interest in other farmers' problems, selfishness, arrogance, lack of time to attend to farmers' needs and complete non-performance. In some cases, trained lead-farmers especially the youths and enterprising males, shifted to towns to trade or engage in more lucrative activities.

Training venues were also arbitrarily selected and inconvenient to some farmers. Some farmers had to move more than five kilometres to attend training. The problem of distant training venues was compounded by frequent unpunctuality of facilitators from VEDCO and at times the cancellation of workshops without prior warning. Such weaknesses frustrated many farmers and dropped out of the programmes. Worst affected by the problem were women, some of whom confessed to leaving their homes with the hope of going back after a few hours to prepare meals for their families, only to be held up for long hours waiting for facilitators who at times never turned up or turned up too late. Farmers argued that it was due to such inconveniences that they demanded for lunch and transport back to their homes.

Farmers also mentioned poor planning by VEDCO (also see section 7.2.2.3) as a problem with the previous programme. It was reported that important training workshops were held at the wrong times in some of the communities. They were either done at the peak of the planting season, during periods of intensive preparation of land for the next planting season or at the end of the season when farmers were busy planning to weed their gardens. One of the farmers commenting on the poor timing of training told me that:

They came in the middle of the farming season and tried to work very hard to catch the season, they made people work very hard. Some thought it would always be “Kasiribaggo” (marathon). Many people failed to cope with that speed and decided that they would not be able to manage VEDCO’s method of work and pulled out of the entire activity (39-k1).

A farmer from a different community complained that VEDCO did the right things at the wrong time:

The major problem with VEDCO is that at times they do the right things at the wrong time. For instance they trained us in vegetable growing just after the planting season. We could not implement yet it is important to implement immediately you get out of the training to avoid forgetting. By the next season many of us had lost the excitement we had felt during the training and never implemented (26k-3).

This view points at the deficiencies in VEDCO’s approach to planning and their commitment to plans made.

8.3 PLANNING ACTION WITH FARMERS

We carefully planned to respond to the challenges raised by planning the responses collectively as the review finding had suggested. We saw the need to group farmers according to their interests as one of the most important outcomes of the review process and most appropriate as a starting point. We decided to expand the criteria for grouping farmers to include the differences in the well-being of households (see section 4.2.1), in addition to the different interests and economic ambitions. With VEDCO’s emerging orientation towards more economic empowerment, we felt that the well-being category to which a farmer belonged influenced his or her capacity to respond to the different programme interests.

Farmers in the rich category were either already producing for the market or had the capacity to do it. Many farmers in the middle category were in transition to the rich category, they were already food secure, and tending towards commercial production. Farmers in the third group were largely food insecure and struggling. This did not mean that poor people were not producing for the market; they actually marketed a large fraction of their produce, but were only

to meet their basic needs, while the others made a profit. This reflected the extent of the vulnerability of the poorer farmers who often had food crops as the only saleable commodity to earn them money to survive.

The nature of activities intended for the different groups of farmers naturally differed out of consideration for their divergent capacities and weaknesses. Whereas the attainment of social and economic empowerment of smallholder farmers through sustainable agriculture, food security and Farm enterprise remained VEDCO's stated goal, the emerging differences in the communities demanded a review of the approach. VEDCO as such, decided on a two-pronged implementation approach to address the differences. On the one hand all farmers in categories one and two who were above food security needs joined the Farm enterprise component of the programme. On the other hand the original Food security component was made to cater for the poor and food insecure farmers in category three. The two components are described in section 8.3.1.

8.3.1 The Farm enterprise component

Workshops in farm enterprise management were organised for farmers tending towards commercialisation in the different communities. The purpose of the workshops was to establish farmers' areas of interest in order to constitute the different interest groups for which tailor-made training programmes were to be developed. We identified seven different interest groups namely those interested in: a) fruit production, b) bananas and coffee, c) maize, beans and groundnuts d) horticulture, e) high value crops, f) traditional root crops and g) small animal rearing. Farmers also expressed a need to be trained in general business management; their specific interest was in bookkeeping, savings and credit, keeping farm records, writing project proposals, seeking funding, budgeting and analysis of project feasibility.

Farm enterprise training workshops were many, and organised according to the location of the participants to avoid the earlier inconvenience of moving long distances for training. Farmers were free to attend as many of the workshops as they were interested in. The duration of the workshops varied between half a day's training and three days to five days depending on the nature of the skills being taught.

8.3.2 Workshops for the food security component

The major purpose of the initial workshops was to review and plan the content of the programme and to collectively draw up the plan of action for implementation. While the Farm enterprise component began by finding out the interests of the farmers, in this one the most important issue was to establish the criteria for food security in a household and making action plans for household food security.

The different communities came up with closely related plans and household food security indicators. We used these different plans to develop the general food security plan and list of indicators for the community. Two interesting aspects emerged during the process. While family size did not feature as a criterion for determining food security in the earlier programme, farmers raised it this time in almost all the community workshops I attended. This was probably due to the depth of the discussions and critical questions asked by facilitators prior to the definition of food security. Participants first had to agree on the average size of the households in their communities before deciding on what would be necessary to have a food secure household. The average size of the household in the communities was seven people, which was high compared to the well-being levels of the different families. All food security indicators were developed with the family size in mind. Some farmers also raised household income and income sources as part of food security for the first time. This was a new aspect that had not been considered in the food security criteria developed in the original VEDCO programme and marked a new dimension in the thinking about food security. The views in Box 8.1 constitute a combination of VEDCO's and the communities' views of a food secure household. Interestingly, not all aspects of the developed criteria were implemented as expected, although they were reached through a participatory process. While for instance every home was supposed to have a granary or food store, none of the farmers actually built one. As it emerged later, granaries were not part of the people's food security culture.

Box (8.1) Household food security requirements agreed by the community

1-Food store or granary with some food stuffs, ¼ acre of Cassava, ½ acre of s/potatoes, ¼ acre of bananas (100 plants), -brewing type (30 plants) planted along boundaries, -¼ acre of maize + beans, -¼ acre of yams, tubers) 20 plants e.g. kyetutumula, cassava and yams

For income generation:

Passion fruit, pineapples, mangoes, oranges, papaw and jack fruit

Coffee ¼ acre (coffee – 100 plants)

Green vegetables including: cabbage, tomatoes, eggplant, green pepper, spinach, carrot, lettuce, ntula, nakati, bbugga, and doodo.

2 pigs (1 Male & 1 Female), 1 cow (local), poultry (5 birds, 4 hens, 1 cock),

4 rabbits

I was informed by one of the elders in the community that this was a fresh-food-eating community where food security was traditionally seen more in terms of availability of drought resistant food stuffs like cassava, yams and other tubers. The failure to build granaries was also associated with farmers' new perspective on food security that incorporated income generation as a more reliable strategy against food insecurity.

Each community developed an action plan for the implementation of the programme. The action plans were localised to meet the interests of the local farmers. Unlike the work plans in the original programme, which only reflected activities and not the people responsible, the new plans stated the different activities and those responsible. The implementation targets were for the first time collectively developed with the full involvement of the community. While these were basically community targets, VEDCO used them in harmonising the organisational targets, although many times such targets were overruled by pressure from the donor and the organisation (see section 7.2.3.2).

8.4 PROCESSES AND METHODS

8.4.1 Observable positive changes

The change to more participatory methodology constituted a revolution in the culture and character of the organisation, the extension workers and the farmers acknowledged this. This was demonstrated in the comments made by different actors about the **method**. The training of extension workers in participatory methodology and its underlying philosophy accorded the necessary experience to apply participatory training and facilitation methods in the community. Planning community activities was decentralised to the community level and the facilitators continuously grew in the spirit of collective planning and activity implementation. Pre- and post-activity analytical meetings became an integral component of the facilitators' work itinerary.

A new approach that was focused, specific and narrowed down to an interest group and later to an individual farmer, replaced the generalised approach used in the first cycle. Staff capacity to communicate during training had also improved far beyond the level of the first phase. The extension workers communicated freely with participants, asked questions and answered those from participants. They created the climate and opportunities for others to participate, included humour and made sessions lively. Both the participants and the extension workers acknowledged the positive changes emerging from the use of participatory methods.

Extension workers, management and the communities commended collective decision-making and implementation, which all saw as one of the major results of the participatory methodology. The methodology allowed the extension workers and the farmers to play leading roles in the planning and the implementation of activities. Management also realised the importance of people working together to address problems. The use of PRA fostered collective decision-making and problem solving at different levels. In VEDCO, the technocratic decision-making experienced during the first phase of the programme was replaced with frequent consultations, sharing of ideas and joint planning of all activities. Within the community, farmers also played a more active role in the planning and implementation of the activities. At the same time, there was evidence of new skills in planning, harmonising, understanding and entrenching the interests of VEDCO and the farmers in both the NGO and the community. For example, farmers told me that some of the participatory tools like priority ranking, buzz groups and problem trees were being used in their other community meetings to reach consensus on contentious issues.

8.4.2 Farmers comments on the training methodology

Farmers described the participatory **methods** used as 'good', 'very good', 'well organised and implemented', and very participatory. Extension workers on their part described the process in very similar terms, from their own perspective as participatory facilitators. To them, the methods were very useful, involving, easy to use and democratic. Interestingly, hailing the participatory methods as they did, they did not fail to point out some of the key weaknesses associated with it (see section 8.8.3).

The above description of training methods as good and participatory at this stage meant a lot to the programme, especially in comparison with the first phase (see section 6.3.3) where learning sessions were described as dull, the facilitators too fast and complicated, using English at the wrong time and in the wrong place, and the extension workers themselves obsessed with delivering a package, and labelling learners not easy 'to teach'. The 'goodness' of the training lay in a number of things as extracts from the farmers' interviews in Box 8.2 demonstrate.

Provision of opportunity to farmers to learn from fellow farmers and also to experiment and discover for themselves was to many farmers a key aspect of the methodology that had helped to turn things round. One lady related what, to her, constituted an exciting experience in

which farmers tried out their newly learned knowledge and skill to capture and kill banana weevils, proving to one unbelieving group-member that their newly acquired skills were actually effective.

Box 8.2 Extracts on why farmers thought the training was good

The training approach was good because the trainers started in a good way by asking us questions about the topic, and then they would start from what we have said to give us what they had prepared. The thing I liked most was the use of our language and local materials. They also arranged for practical sessions and exposure to farmers who were already doing well. Visiting farmers like Mr Kizza of Zirowwe was a very big challenge, which actually made me believe that I can also do something in my small way (15k-2).

The facilitators were always straight to the point and never wasted our time and taught in the language we all understood, (the major problem is late coming) they took care of our weaknesses, and for instance they often gave very good icebreakers and energisers to refresh the minds. These people never turned themselves into experts they were willing to listen to the participants' views; they accepted all our answers, however incorrect, without despising or ridiculing us (7k-3).

The training helped us a lot because now I know how to space my crops. I can measure the distances in the garden, and I can make compost. I also teach my neighbours although some of them don't follow my advice. They gave us all chances to ask questions, seek clarification and contribute ideas and the extension workers (*abalimisa*) recorded all of them and responded appropriately later. The problem we have with the *balimisa* is their disappearance at times for many days without warning (3k-1).

The training on banana management was, for example, comprehensive starting with the very preparation procedures, through identification of a good sucker, planting, management (21k-2).

The way they conduct training these days is good because in the past they just used to call us to attend training without finding out what we were interested in. One time they called us to attend training at Katikamu on rabbit rearing but we were very disappointed because, even us who were interested in training in crop husbandry, we found ourselves wasting our time listening to things we were not interested in. The aspect I have come to like about VEDCO'S approach is the way they follow up the farmers in their homes to give them support. In the past, different organisations like UNFAFA and NARO called us for training in Luwero, but these people never came to see our gardens so they never knew whether we implemented what they taught us. One wonders whether they were even interested at all in knowing whether we would implement what they taught or not (33k-3).

What is good about the training is that we normally discuss, because they give us what they have and we also contribute to the learning from our own ideas. They don't despise our ideas, but where necessary with respect correct us. Lastly what they teach is part of our major interests (23k-2)

... For instance Mzee Ssetimba had refused to accept that dipping banana suckers in cold water overnight could kill weevils and earthworms, arguing that "ate oba zibeera mubunnyogovu amazzi gazitta gatyia"? (*Meaning: how can banana weevils die in cold water when they naturally thrive in cold conditions*) but they gave us opportunity to experiment it, at one of our neighbours' home, and when we returned the following day we found all the earthworms and other weevils floating on top of the water dead! We also had opportunity to learn how to trap other weevils like Kayovu, they practically demonstrated for us. Now all of us who attended can trap these weevils. They also gave us a chance to choose what we wanted to learn, when they came in for the 1st time they taught about bananas, but for some time now, we were the ones who decided on what to learn (18k-2).

They also described the methods as interactive and dialogical, allowing learners to interact between themselves and facilitators. Farmers' views also demonstrate the important role of facilitators in making participatory training methods work effectively. This flows through all the discussions and is discussed later in chapter nine. Farmers were not only able to identify good educational methodology, but also to express dissatisfaction with poor ones (see Box 8.2. 33k-3).

8.4.3 Extension workers' views of participatory methodology

The extension workers acknowledged that participatory methods in general and PRA/PLA in particular, had transformed their methods of work, their approach to learners, the management and the organisational culture (see Box 8.3). One of the extension workers told me that it was no longer possible for top management or anybody at any level to impose views on a person, whether one was at the highest, middle or lowest rung of the hierarchy. They also described the participatory decision-making process adopted by the organisation illustrating the different stages, stakeholders and processes involved.

We specifically used PRA methods for their unique capacity to **combine**, learning, action, participation and information generation (Hall 1981). We were also inspired by its emancipatory nature which, among other things helps participants to build confidence, enables people to explore their contexts and acknowledge their own capacities, often ignored by development workers. While this had been part of the organisational policy for long, it was being implemented for the first time. In many ways, the use of PRA in this phase of the programme was experimental and the results were positive, as illustrated in Box 8.3. A number of important issues related to participatory training methods can be deduced from the views of the extension workers including:

- The capacity to enhance collective decision-making, planning and implementation
- Harmonising stakeholders' interests, points of view and understanding
- Nurturing participatory behaviour between participants
- Capacity to empower stakeholders beyond practical skills (psycho-social empowerment)
- Some weaknesses associated with the methodology in spite of the strengths

Box 8. 3 Examples of extension workers' views on participatory methods

I have found the PRA methodology very useful, particularly in the new approach; first, we as extension workers played a major role in the organisation and actual implementation of the situation analysis using this methodology. It is no longer possible for top management to make decisions about what is to be done in the
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community without involving us and it is also no longer possible for us to decide anything for the community without involving them. We have to sit as a group first and plan what we are going to do in the community, i.e. we set the agenda we are to follow in the community, we go through a guide on issues we intend to generate information about, we develop some key questions and issues to guide discussion and activities in the community.

This does not mean that what we design in our meeting is final, but it gives us a sense of direction and helps us have a uniform approach, but when we reach the community we share our agenda with the people and see how acceptable it is. If not, we develop a new one, which integrates the ideas on the community. For instance when we wanted to establish new criteria for defining a food secure household, we first developed our own criteria as a group, went to the community and began on the process with the people, but having an idea of what a food secure household should look like. We often found our own ideas identical with those of the community. We in the end merged our criteria with community criteria and it has been always an interesting exercise. (EXT I)

I cannot say we have used all the PRA tools, but we have found some of them particularly essential in our case, including problem trees, food security ranking, income and expenditure tree and matrix, pie charts, seasonal calendars and daily activity charts. The community action plan is always the last activity of the PRAs. We normally tell the community we are going to set up our own village plan. We start by getting one or two of them to volunteer to do the drafting while the rest generate the ideas. We then ask them to point out the main activities they want done during the particular period to be covered by the plan. All activities are listed, then we ask them to decide which activities should be done first and why. When an agreement is reached, we plot them on our action plan, indicating which activities when they will be done, by who, which resources are necessary and at times we ask them to show where the resources will come from.

I often employ a strategy of conducting learning sessions in people's homes; we keep changing from one household to another, which helps in several ways. It in the first place removes any artificiality in the learning as people are not removed from their environment, but more to that, different members take responsibilities in organising and conducting certain sessions. ***What type of sessions do they run?*** For example, when they are to learn about a specific practice done by one of the members, e.g. if one has a well managed banana plantation, passion fruit garden or horticultural gardens, we arrange training in the person's home and the person leads the session, although I supplement and complement what has been discussed. I also take advantage of these sessions to learn new things from the farmers. I for instance learnt from Kisitu of Nongo why it is not always very useful to uproot all banana suckers from the plant because it makes the remaining ones very weak in the ground and vulnerable to storms (EXT II).

Participatory approaches are an integral part of our entire system of extension in all activities, including farm support. My experience now that we are using more participatory approaches is that when I visit a farmer who decided in a participatory way what he/she should grow and how, it is a lot easier because I no longer seem like I am imposing my views on them, but sharing experiences and reminding each other what might be necessary and has already accepted to do. I have however also observed that when we meet as groups, some of the individuals are suppressed because we tend to emphasise issues, which are applicable to the general group, leaving out some of the more personal. Often farmers come out with real issues, but you realise the issue is personal and the group tries to silence such people saying they are being irrelevant. Then I realise that good as the approach looks, it leaves out the specific interests, strengths and weaknesses of individuals. For example, when you talk about the criteria for categorising farmers according to their well-being or capacities, a clear case is in looking at commercial farmers as those having a certain amount of land, forgetting that there might be people who have less, but are interested. They see themselves as marginalised and pullout saying '*bya bagagga*' (EXT III).

Participatory Approaches have enabled us to make action plans at community level with the community itself that are relevant to the needs of the people and we are now going to begin making household action plans focussing on the house situation, interests, aspirations and capacities. We have started in some of the areas where we have done farm business awareness workshops after the PRA. The purpose is to work with the individual farmer to improve the production levels and well-being needs.

8.5 REFLECTIONS ON THE TREND OF THE PROGRAMME

In April 2001, we had a two-day internal assessment of the programme. The workshop was convened to reflect on the plans we had made, the strategies and the emerging issues. Early indications reflected that the programme was on course and the team expressed satisfaction with progress. The farm enterprise component was most exciting in that, apart from attracting more committed people, through it, a number of transformations especially in character of the community were beginning to take shape. Farmers were, for example, for the first time positively responding to VEDCO's policy of 'no handouts'. They, unlike in the past, agreed to feed themselves during workshops, paid their transport to training venues and during exposure visits. Instead of asking for handouts as had been the case in the past, they were asking how to access credit and micro-finance. The number of farmers responding positively by implementing the skills learnt was growing fast and the drop-out rate was much lower than it had been in the past. Farmers were willing to take the initiative to travel to the NGO office to seek technical assistance from extension workers.

The food security component had also registered some substantial progress. The relationship between the farmers and VEDCO was becoming less patriarchal than it had initially been, due to more positive interaction through the participatory methodology. Extracts from extension workers' interviews in Box 8.4 are testimony to the acclaimed transformation. Although poorer farmers aiming to achieve food security were slower in applying new skills than commercialising ones, there was evidence of as much commitment among them as among their richer counterparts. Poor as many of them were, they were able to spend some money to purchase quality planting materials like clonal coffee seedlings, improved banana suckers, grafted fruit trees and nitrogen fixing trees. Responses like the one below often came from the farmers during interviews

I have spent some money on compost making, digging trenches to prevent soil erosion. I have also bought and planted fruit trees like oranges and mangoes, nitrogen fixing like calliandra and cessbania and some good indigenous trees like ficus. All these I have learnt from VEDCO training programmes in the last one and half years
(9k-3)

Responses derived from interviews with extension workers corroborated the above evidence (see Box 8.4).

Box 8.4 Extension workers' comments on farmer transformation

There are several changes I have seen in the farmers I have worked with since I began a year and half ago. The farmers are more confident in a positive way. As I said earlier, I have been using a participatory approach where everybody in the group has had opportunity to host the entire group at his home as a learning venue. It was very difficult to convince a person to host a learning session let alone facilitate. These days they compete to host the sessions. It was also very difficult for any of them to come out and talk about their experiences or ask questions, but slowly by slowly they have picked up the practice. Another important change I have seen is in the area of self-reliance. People are now willing to contribute money for activities like exposure visits; they also accept to pay for planting materials like banana suckers, coffee clones, grafted fruit trees and nitrogen fixing trees. In the past they used to complain that they were too poor to buy these things, that they should be given for free, but when we insisted that it is only those willing to sacrifice that would work with us, they changed completely! There are some cases of dependency, but the majority has now transformed a lot in this respect. Farmers have also started to come to our field office to consult and report their concerns where they want us to help them. They can even contribute for their lunch during training, yet in the past they used to quarrel and even abandon meetings when we refused to provide lunch. Farmers have also begun to challenge our way of doing things. On many occasions during the PRA and other meetings they have criticised us on such issues as late coming and failure to follow up work plans. At first, farmers were very worried about things like where to buy pesticides and to market their products, especially horticultural products and they used to look at VEDCO as responsible to get them markets since VEDCO had introduced the crops to the community. These days they look for their markets. Others have formed groups to collectively hire vehicles to transport their produce, either to markets in Kampala or Wobulenzi town. I think this is sufficient evidence of change on the part of farmers (EXT III).

I have realised that farmers have also been empowered beyond knowledge to improve their production. They know what they want. They can ask very challenging questions, which make us rethink many of the things we do. For instance they challenge us as to why we make them develop action plans which we, at times, fail to fully follow and at times come back and ask them to re-plan before the old one has been implemented fully. At times they have physically brought out the plans and asked me "musomesa, okusenziira ku plan yaffe twalibadde mumusomo gwa nkoko na mbuzi ng'anda naye kati tuli kubirala!" (*Meaning: educator, according to our plan we were supposed to be learning about local chicken and goats around this time, but now you are talking about different things*). But I think even us as extension workers and our bosses have also been empowered in many ways. We can for example recognise and respect the capacity of our partners. Even our attitude has changed. You see how often we meet and decide with them what to do. (EXT II)

The participation of farmers in the development of action plans, the establishment of their own local criteria for assessing food security and implementing a significant number of the aspects introduced in the training, can be seen as farmer commitment arising from the choice and use of appropriate methodology. This could be associated with good training and the farmer recruitment process, exposure visits and some improvement in the logistical support for extension workers.

One important finding of the second cycle was that the pursuit of economic interests motivated poor and rich farmers alike. This was in line with VEDCO's goal of economic empowerment. In VEDCO's economic ideology, which became increasingly conspicuous in this phase of the project, a worthwhile partner in the community was the "active poor"²⁹. It was this very

²⁹ VEDCO 1999 states that in a bid to achieve economic empowerment of the smallholder farmers the organization committed itself to working with the active poor as partners in the struggle. The active poor were, according to VEDCO, those people living in poverty, but not allowing it to keep them down, always making visible efforts to overcome it.

philosophy that guided the recruitment of farmers into the farm enterprise and food security project components. The change did not mean that all farmers were satisfactorily covered by this description; there were a good number of farmers still behaving in a very unpredictable way.

The general feeling was that the current phase of the programme was on course and in line with the organisation's expectations. In my opinion, it was still too early to celebrate victory for two major reasons. Many farmers attended training, participated in many meetings and community plans, but did not implement any of the programme activities. The impact on the ground had not been fully assessed, but even if it had been established, it was not yet clear how sustainable these gains were. In addition, the increasing move towards commercially oriented goals was unconsciously turning the organisation into a corporate enterprise, the results of which were not only undermining other forms of sustainability, but also shaking off many of those non un-enterprising members of the community whose activities still directly and indirectly undermined the attainment of sustainable development. The goals were becoming more individualistic, although the common concerns still existed.

8.6 ACTION AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

The impression I got from the reflections in section 8.5 was mixed and confusing, especially for me as a researcher with an emancipatory agenda. Listening to the comments of extension workers and the management staff about the **methods** and results one would get the impression that the project had achieved its ultimate goal or was just about to achieve it, in other words a call for a sudden end of our PAR enterprise. These were bad signs for a participatory action research project where the next step is determined by the previous one. I was convinced that the current situation was neither the last stage of the journey nor the ultimate vision of the organisation, if any thing, it was just the beginning of many new challenges to unfold.

The situation compelled me to change my research strategy. I adopted a new strategy that involved engaging both the farmers and VEDCO staff in person-to-person in-depth dialogue regarding the programme and to explore for myself all that had been done by farmers as a result of the programme. My overall aim here was to establish the extent to which the

programme was nurturing the spirit of participation, enhancing environmental sustainability, addressing environmental policy issues, side by side with the other goals of economic and social empowerment. I also wanted to find out farmer's views on the training they had received, and how they were making use of it. Between the 12th and 18th months of my field research, I interviewed individual farmers and extension workers. The purpose was to identify their views on the programme actions associated with training farmers had experienced and how extension workers had responded to farmers' concerns.

8.6.1 Farmers' actions as represented in the interviews

I interviewed sixty farmers, twenty from each of the three parishes of Misaale, Kiteme and Kibiriizi (section 3.8.2.3). I worked with the extension workers to identify five farmers from each of the three categories identified during the situation analysis, i.e. five in the top 'rich' class, five in the 'middle' class and five among the 'very poor' ones. The purpose, as already mentioned, was to establish how they were making use of the training provided by VEDCO extension workers.

8.6.1.1 Training received by farmers

I started by establishing which training activities the different farmers had participated in. They grouped the training they had got into seven categories. The categories included sustainable agriculture, crop management, farm business education, post-harvest handling, pest and disease management, food security management and farm planning.

Table 8.2 Training received by different farmers (n=60)

Training received	Male N=33	Female N=27	% Of total	Source of training
Sustainable agriculture	16	19	58%	VEDCO & EA ³⁰
Crop management	16	13	48%	VEDCO, UNAFAs ³¹ , NARO ³²
Pest/disease management	16	14	50%	VEDCO
Food security management	10	9	31%	VEDCO
Farm business education	13	5	30%	VEDCO
Farm planning	14	4	30%	VEDCO
Post-harvest handling	13	3	25%	VEDCO

Although farmers had received most of their training from VEDCO (Table 8.2), organisations like UNAFAs and NARO had also provided similar training. The difference was that VEDCO, unlike UNAFAs and NARO, was a local organisation based in Luwero, with a commitment to the farmers in the district and with a particular programme tailored to the needs and conditions of the community. The training by NARO is either for experimentation, dissemination of research findings or promoting a certain technology.

Most farmers had attended training in sustainable agriculture comprising of: soil-fertility management, compost making, animal integration, control of soil erosion and agro-forestry. Crop management was specifically organised to for particular crops as demanded by the farmers. Pest and disease management was offered as part of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) component. Farmers were trained to control pests by combining locally available materials with some agro-chemicals.

Although sustainable agriculture, food security management and pest and disease management were among the core training programmes and open to all interested farmers, not

³⁰ Environmental Alert (EA) is a local NGO specializing in training and research in sustainable agriculture. It works closely with VEDCO, particularly in the area of training for environmental sustainability.

³¹ UNAFAs is a National umbrella organisation bringing together all farmers in the country. UNAFAs organises training and exposure visits for its members in different components of agriculture.

³² The major aim of the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) is to do research and introduce innovations in agriculture, animal industry, fisheries and forestry for national development.

all farmers had participated in those training activities. Farmers explained that participation in many of the training programmes, important as they were, was at the expense of something else. They had many other activities in addition to farming, such as trading, government or private employment, which were often more reliable and financially rewarding than farming.

8.6.1.2 Training and community action

To establish farmers' responses to environmental challenges, I asked farmers to tell me and later show me the different aspects of the training they had applied (see Table 8.3). There was a clear relationship between poverty and low implementation of sustainable agricultural practices by farmers. The poor farmers implemented least of the recommended practices in most cases, a possible indication of inadequate capacity. I came across a number of farmers in this category whose interest in and commitment to the application of sustainable farming practices was gravely hampered by poverty (see section 8.7.1).

The generally unimpressive implementation of some of the most highly recommended sustainable agricultural practices is also worth noting here. Although compost, mulching, anti-erosion trenches, contours and double digging, are basic to sustainable agriculture, they were least applied by farmers. Instead, agro-chemicals featured prominently, even among the poor farmers, despite VEDCO's discouragement and the expense. The frequent use of agro-chemicals posed a threat to the environment and the drive towards organic farming and sustainable agriculture (see section 8.8.5).

Farmers combined several practices, which probably accounted for the lower frequency of some key practices. The figures in Table 8.3 represent a summary of the application of skills and knowledge gained by different farmers, but they do not reveal the factors underlying the variations in practice. Also not revealed here is the farmers' emotional attachment to both the skills, and the way they had acquired them. I found that the last two were very important ingredients of farmers' inner motivations for continued action and anticipated sustainability

Table 8.3 How farmers from different well-being categories (see section 4.2.1 and appendix 4.2) applied the skills learnt in training (n=60) (NB: The frequencies are higher than the actual figures because farmers used combinations of practices at all times).

Action taken	Poor farmers N=20	Middle farmers N=20	Rich farmers N=20	Freq per action
Compost making and application	6	7	11	24
Liquid manure	5	5	1	11
Mulching	4	7	12	23
Application of animal waste	5	5	15	25
Local anti-pest concoctions	8	10	7	25
Planted nitrogen fixing plants	5	11	16	32
Dug trenches and contours	5	5	14	24
Planted grass cover	3	5	10	18
Recommended planting	6	12	17	35
Double digging	0	0	0	0
Chemical fertilisers as supplement	2	6	13	21
Used Agro-chemicals	8	15	12	35
Intercropping	13	8	7	28
Indigenous knowledge ³³	11	8	7	26
IPM	7	11	16	33
No action	4	2	3	9
Total frequency	92	117	161	

Source: Field Data

In general, farmers were proud of the new knowledge and skills they had acquired. The farmers I interviewed were particularly happy with the way the learning had helped them to transform their farming methods and subsequent outcomes. It came out clearly during individual interviews that farmers were actually making use of the knowledge and skills and many of them proudly expressed it. One of the farmers could not hide his excitement over his gains,

In the past we used to complain a lot about poor soils, but I think it was because we did not know how to utilise soils in a sustainable way. They used to say that one could not harvest, more than once on a banana plant because the soils were too poor to sustain

more than one harvest but now we can keep our bananas as long as we want, because we know how to keep the soils fertile for long. "Batugambanga nti ettooke olyako bbereberye ekitooke nga kikala naye kati abantu balima n'amatooke nebagalya okumala ekiseera okuva lwe twayiga okuliisa n'obutazisa nsuku." (*Meaning: "they used to tell us that banana plants here could only yield once and dry due to bad soils, but these days we can harvest for long since we learnt to care take proper care of their banana plantations"*)

Extracts from farmers' interviews in Box 8.5 paint clear pictures of farmers' feelings.

Box 8.5 How some farmers have utilised the training in sustainable agriculture

I am using compost to rejuvenate the soils, I have also used liquid manure and cow dung to enhance fertility. I have dug trenches to prevent soil erosion and have planted elephant grass on the ridges to hold the soils. When I grow a crop like maize I use the recommended method to ensure that water does not erode the soil. I plant in lines and only two seeds in a hole (14k-2).

I use old banana stems (*ebiteteme*) and banana leaves to mulch, because they maintain cool temperatures in the garden. I have tried to maintain fertility by digging trenches and water traps. I also allow some of the weeds to overgrow so that I can dig and cover it with soil to ensure that when they rot they can generate nutrients for the crops. In the banana plantation I make a water trap around every banana plant to ensure that even when it is dry some water will remain for the plants to use. I have tried compost, but it is not easy to carry. The labour involved is too much. At times you might miss the preparation of land for planting while preparing compost (4k-1).

I have learnt to make and apply compost, plant tea, dig trenches, plant elephant grass, which helps to hold soils together. I have also learnt to integrate vegetable gardens in the banana garden that helps to hold water in the garden. I have been using these techniques for a whole year and during this period I see a great change, especially with my bananas and vegetable gardens (38k-1).

The views in Box 8.5 were useful in highlighting farmers' views of success. The question was to what extent were these views manifested in practical actions on the farmers' farms. I visited and interviewed farmers to check their claims. In most cases, farmers' stories corresponded with the actions on the ground. There was evidence of implementation, albeit with difficulties in some areas.

What is presented in Table 8.3 is a representation of individual action and not collective action. While farmers were trained as a group(s), they implemented as individuals in their private capacities and on their private premises. The programme had not effectively touched public concerns like deforestation, uncontrolled quarrying and clay mining, although it was thought that the income generating components would attract potential degraders. There were also contradictory scenarios where particular households perfectly implemented environmental

³³ I have used this term to refer to all traditional practices of land conservation that had not been included in the training activities but I found them being used by farmers.

friendly practices, side by side with others exhibiting total absence of concern, not only for the environment, but also for one's personal survival.

8.7 CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY ACTION AS REFLECTED IN FARMERS' RESPONSES

There were many obstacles beyond the control of the farmers that limited their ability to use the knowledge and skills they had gained through training. Poverty (also see section 4.2), lack of control over key resources like land by a number of farmers, especially women (see section 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4), unfavourable micro-finance policies, inconsistencies in VEDCO'S method of work, some remaining weaknesses in the training approach and development strategy and the remnants of the spirit of dependency in the community (see section 7.2.3.1) arising from a turbulent political and social past, followed by a long period of donor-based recovery.

8.7.1 Economic vulnerability

Farmers mentioned lack of income and limited access to essential resources like land as major obstacles in the implementation of whatever they had learned in the different workshops geared towards addressing both environmental and poverty issues in the community (also see sections 4.2, 9.1.3). A number of the farmers I interacted with gave illuminating descriptions of poverty and its impact on their lives. I found these particular descriptions revealing:

People are poor and most of them depend on personal labour. It becomes difficult for many of us to practise the new skills and knowledge, because some of them need money to be implemented. At times those people wait to see how we who implement benefit from the things we do, but unfortunately many of us are not good examples. I, for one, for instance, grew eggplant in large numbers. When they matured, I had nobody to sell to, yet I had wanted to use money from the sales to buy the necessary inputs. As a result my problem became worse, I wanted pesticides to kill the pests because the local concoctions had failed to kill all of them, but here I was, unable to complete the work I had embarked on. My situation became a point of reference for those who denigrated our involvement in the training; I could not attract those slow adopters, because there was nothing good to learn from me. Actually they laugh at me because some are better off than me (1k-1).

Another farmer lamented similarly and I could clearly see his plight, which, I believe, was shared by many of his compatriots:

The training approach and content has been very good, because it focused on the real things we have been trying to understand and now I can say that I know what I am doing, but there is one thing: *Omwavu ne bwasona taba n'amagezi* ("It does not matter how much you train a poor person, he will always remain a fool"). Due to poverty we cannot implement, that is, get those materials like banana suckers, improved seeds, that is why we are still seen as fools. Our knowledge is not reflected. Do you think a visitor will see me and believe I have any knowledge and wisdom? No. no. Because of poverty I am sitting on them. (42k-1).

I have attended VEDCO training on sustainable agriculture, coffee and vegetable farming. I used to make liquid manure, but it is not easy for people who don't have spare containers to keep those fertilisers during making and period of use because many people in this community just have enough containers to keep water for household use. I used old Jerry cans and a drum, but these are not enough for my size of garden. We have also participated in the PRA training to make a community work plan (40k-1).

Other farmers I talked to emphasised their plight with equally telling evidence. Some of them argued that using locally available materials and resources did not make sustainable agriculture manageable to every person in the poverty-stricken community. While, for example, farmers had been taught to make compost and liquid manure, many of them did not have any spare containers within their homes to make and store the liquid manure.

Compost making requires among other things water and animal waste, (dung or urine). Not many of the farmers had livestock of their own, and, as I was informed, at the beginning those with livestock were sympathetic and gave free waste to poor farmers, but on realising that the poor farmers were producing and earning income from the produce, they began selling the waste at the cost of 500 shillings (\$0.3) a wheel barrow. Small as this fee might look, it was difficult for many poor farmers to raise, partly due to genuine lack, and partly as a refusal. Farmers had apparently not recognised the onset of the commercialisation and

commoditisation of the material and social relations of production in which they were central actors. Some basic equipment like spray pumps, were also lacking and the few who had them were not willing to lend them out freely.

In a farming project like this one, land is a very essential asset. As section 4.2.1 shows, many people do not own the land on which they live and farm. Some have to borrow, hire, or live as squatters on land, all of which proved insecure modes of access. The borrowing and hiring of land was always a temporary solution. There are no written contracts or agreements, which subjected the borrowers to the mercy of the lenders, many of whom often exploited the landless.

Some landowners were also victims of the legacy of the traditional cash crop vs. food crop production system, which had tied them to perennial crops that occupied land permanently, but only yielded once or twice a year while at the same time demanding intensive care. Average land ownership in the district is 3 acres per household (section 4.2.1), but more than half of the land is often under coffee or banana; such crops by their nature enjoy permanent monopoly on the land, they occupy. This meant that out of the average three acres the farmer remains with approximately an acre, on which to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the training. Farmers in this category found implementation quite difficult as one explained:

Many people do not have enough land where to implement. Even those who seem to have, the land left for growing household food is small. Many intercrop even the crops that are not supposed to be intercropped because they have no alternative. We cannot even plant according to the recommended guidelines because of the same reason.

8.7.2 Challenging nature of sustainable agricultural practices

Some of the techniques and methods of sustainable agriculture were difficult for the farmers to apply. Sustainable agricultural practices were not easy options in that most of them were labour intensive, which made them both expensive and impracticable, especially by the poorer people with no money to hire the necessary labour. Farmers singled out double digging as the most challenging tilling practice encouraged under sustainable agriculture. This was in spite of the fact that it is one of the most productive tilling practices (see table 8.3). Compost-making was also among the challenging sustainable agriculture practices. Although there had been a shift from the traditional pit to heap compost, which is less cumbersome, the materials required were many and difficult to get at the same time. According to the farmers, it was difficult for them to

get the required animal waste and the transportation of the water was also difficult due to the distance from wells and the limited numbers and sizes of containers. The extension workers also acknowledged this as one of them said:

The communities are not very good at implementing what we teach them much, as our training may be excellent. Their capacity to implement is low, especially due to fact that most of the technology and practices we introduce are labour-intensive, particularly in sustainable agriculture. Practices like double digging, heap compost, contour and trench digging (*fanya juu, fanya chini*) need a lot of energy and time, if one is to benefit from them. Yet some of our farmers are either women who already have a lot of work to do and no money to hire labour, or elderly without the necessary energy. We also have a group of farmers who always fear to take the initiative. They all the time expect to begin after they have seen somebody who has succeeded in using the training and then try it themselves (EXT III).

Another challenge related to this was the wish by farmers to use chemical pesticides, even though this was in theory discouraged by VEDCO. Local concoctions did not effectively destroy the pests. There were resistant pests that could neither be repelled nor killed using environmentally friendly methods, but in fact the extension workers themselves shared this tension with me; while they focussed consistently on the local production and use of organic fertilizers and environmentally-friendly pest management, using such material as chillies and various organic 'concoctions', there were times when they felt compelled to advise farmers to supplement with chemicals to control pests that had the potential to wipe out entire crops and severely affect food security and household incomes.

The 'invincible' pests aside, there were cases where extension workers also found it necessary to advise farmers to apply some chemical fertilisers to quicken the crop response, as organic fertilisers take a little longer. The purpose was twofold, to meet the organisation and donor demand for quick results and to motivate farmers with results that would encourage them to do more. The view of one of the extension workers is testimony to the above contradictions:

I always try my best to emphasise sustainable agriculture principles during training, but often conditions do not allow. Farmers often complain of the cumbersomeness of some of the practices like compost making and double digging. Farmers find it more convenient to use five kilograms of NPK on $\frac{1}{4}$ an acre banana-garden, without hiring labour and they get similar results like one who used compost. Natural pesticides also have limited capacity to deal with some of the pests. This compels us to advise farmers to use some chemical pesticides to

tackle those stubborn pests. In addition, some farmers have no capacity in terms of raw materials for organic manure, I have seen people begging for cow dung from their neighbours to be able to use it in their compost. What we encourage is IPM, otherwise it is really difficult to use only one approach and be effective. I have seen farmers finding it easier to buy chemicals to spray their crops than look for local materials to make concoctions.

The nature of sustainable agriculture – being slow in yielding results and requiring much physical labour in the process was a major disincentive to the youths who were interested in earning cash quickly. As a result they mostly shunned the training and favoured environmentally damaging activities like charcoal burning, firewood cutting, sand mining and brick baking. The cumbersome nature of some of the sustainable agricultural practices was also a constraint among the older participants and women without access to assistance. They were frustrated by the amount of energy required for some of the sustainable agricultural practices; one woman told me that she had tried all she could, but her efforts to prevent soil erosion were being frustrated by the absence of her husband, who had promised to dig the trenches she could not manage herself.

8.7.3 Household dynamics

Farmers' responses revealed household dynamics, including gender relations, as key obstacles to the effective implementation of programme activities by farmers (see section 9.1.2). As discussed in chapter four, out of the sixty farmers I interviewed, twenty-seven were women, ten of whom were household heads, but even so, none of them owned the land they worked on (also see section 4.2.3).

Land and household gender dynamics aside, there were other gender-related obstacles to programme implementation. Such obstacles included lack of interest in sustainable agriculture, by either member of the couple (although it often turned out to be the husbands), dependency and interdependency between couples. Men who lacked interest in sustainable agriculture were often less supportive of the women's efforts to implement the sustainable agricultural practices they had learned. In other cases, women expected men to play certain roles in the implementation and vice versa, but many times the expected reciprocation never occurred, leading to failure and frustration as some women explained:

Since I learnt from VEDCO training, I have started addressing the land infertility issue. I once made compost, but I stopped because it was very cumbersome yet my husband had no interest in it. But now he has learnt the value of new methods of sustainable agriculture, and has started helping me. He only changed when he saw the giant bunches of bananas we got from the small plot, which we used as a demonstration for sustainable agriculture with the VEDCO extension workers.

Another woman complained that her husband had promised to help her dig the trenches to control soil erosion, but got involved in other activities and could not dig them, yet for her, she had done all she could, but trenches were too difficult. They needed a stronger person.

I discovered that while women did most of the agriculture, not all of them had the freedom to participate in the training. Surprisingly, many men participated in the training, although they were less involved than women in the day-to-day farming. But even then many of the men who attended the training on 'behalf of the household' did not teach their wives what they had learnt as one of the women told me:

I have not attended any VEDCO training, but my husband has attended all. Sometimes he informs me of what has been taught, sometimes he does not, but I have benefited more from the visits by the extension worker, who frequently checks on us and guides me on how to do certain things (36k-2).

Individual interviews revealed that some men still prevented their wives from attending public functions including training. One female farmer lamented during an interview;

Women would be very active, but many men are not interested in allowing their wives to get out of the household.

The above issues notwithstanding, there were also many men who not only supported their wives, but also worked with them to implement whatever they learnt from the programmes. The interesting aspect was that in all cases, such households emerged with some of the most impressive results and often became models in the villages.

8.8 PERSONAL AND STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES TO COMMUNITY ACTION

8.8.1 The spirit of dependency and self-pity as an obstacle

In chapter seven (section 7.2.3.1) I broached the spirit of dependency prevalent in the community. Although many people took part in the training, few had a genuine interest in implementing what had been taught. Some farmers I talked to said that many people attended the training hoping that VEDCO would offer handouts to participants. Such people did not only abandon the programme when their expectations were not met but also scoffed at those interested, for wasting time with VEDCO 'a mean organisation' as they often put it "VEDCO tevaako na buugi" (*meaning: VEDCO is so mean that you cannot even get free porridge from them, the cheapest thing*). One woman related to me how she was asked every time she tried to mobilise women to participate in the training:

There are also some women who have nothing to stop them, but are just lazy; others say "bwetunagenda mumusomo byetunasoma banabituwa, oba tebatuwa tufiira ki?" (*Meaning: will they give us the planting materials so that we implement what they have taught us? If not why should we sacrifice our time and energy?*) Yet when Plan International gave us free coffee seedlings, many sold them to get cash and others left them unattended and dried, some did not even plant the seedlings (18k-2)

While such dependency could partly be associated with the poverty in the community, it could not be easily explained why the same farmers failed to make proper use of the free coffee seedlings they got from PLAN International. Some farmers also argued that laziness and lack of ambition by other farmers prevented them from taking up challenges:

People say they can't use all the skills, "olimayo kimu nokiteeka kumagezi g'omusomesa, nti bwanajja kyenja okumulaga" (*meaning: "you at least select one crop and grow it using the extensionists' advice when he comes you have some thing to show him, but continue things in your easy way"*) Others say "Abatalimira kumagezi gamusomesa tebalya. Asimbye kasooliwe, oba ebijanjaalo, abitidde agamba olya naye alya; ki ennyo?" (*Meaning: does it mean those who don't follow the extensionists' guidelines don't eat. After all I farm my way, you farm your way, don't each of us feed our people? So what*). These are people annually experiencing food scarcity in their homes. Some even steal food (3k-1).

8.8.2 Selfishness and individualism

Selfishness and individualism was another local problem undermining the successful utilisation of the knowledge and skills acquired through training. In such a poverty-stricken community one would have expected collaboration as one of the potential solutions to some of the problems. The collaborative approach based on this assumption had actually failed in the first phase of the programme when farmers left the community demonstration gardens to the a few individuals who were committed. Even in this phase, the expected collaboration did not happen. There were situations where it was necessary for individuals to collaborate in order to address some common problems, but many farmers refused to do so. In one of such cases, caterpillars attacked two cabbage gardens belonging to neighbours and one of the extension workers, out of sympathy, advised them to combine resources and buy a small hand spray pump. Surprisingly, in spite of the destruction the pests were causing to their crops, both farmers refused the advice, yet they were not enemies. One of them argued “bwogattiriza, emikisagyo bagitwala” (*meaning: if you keep combining resources with others, your own blessings will be sucked into those of the partner*). In a similar case, two women combined money to buy a certain agrochemical to spray weevils attacking their cabbages, but each of them wanted to take the original container, believing that whoever took it, would have all the blessings!

8.8.3 Lax enforcement of government policy

While the introduction of a participatory approach to community-based programme implementation was hailed to a great extent, some farmers saw it as the root cause of flouting policy, and refusing to take responsibility, including the utilisation of knowledge and skills acquired through training. Some farmers argued that the participatory approach government and NGOs were promoting, pampered lazy people and bred potential criminals. An elderly farmer emphasised this point, which had also been expressed by two others. He argued:

There is too much freedom, which has made people very disobedient, and in the end, lazy. The participatory democracy may cause us more harm than good. We talk of freedom, but should one have the freedom to refuse to work, starve his family and in the end inconvenience others by stealing their food? In the past we used to have by-laws for food security. Every household had an obligation to reserve a cassava garden which would not be touched until the sub-parish chief was convinced that it was necessary to begin eating it, either at the peak of famine or when a young one had been planted. But these days they say that was dictatorship, every person is given

liberty to do what he wants even not working, others sell all the food they grow and leave none for the family; they say that is freedom (15k-2)

I found this challenge to participation and participatory democracy at community level quite insightful and telling. It was calling for a re-examination of the relationship between traditional leadership and modern participatory democracy, in executing individual and collective responsibilities. It was true that many people hid behind the banner of personal freedom to evade responsibility, even when that evasion directly affected their own well-being and that of their families. Another farmer voiced similar sentiments accusing local authorities of handling food security issues with kid gloves. To him, many of the non-implementers were the youth with the physical energy to implement the preferred practices, but deliberately refused to put their energy to productive use. The only solution he saw was 'kubalondoola bakwasibwe maanyi balyoke batye bakole' (*let them be closely monitored and forcefully handled, that way they will fear and implement*). These views point at the dilemma of transition from traditional authoritarian control to participation and participatory democracy.

There was yet another dimension to participatory methods. Some farmers felt that while it was good to give them the opportunity to contribute ideas for inclusion in the training content. The farmers at times lacked sufficient knowledge of what they actually needed. This, they argued, made them at times to miss some essential things, considering what they thought was important from their own limited knowledge. One woman I talked to substantiated this point:

The training process was good, but we made one mistake. Because they used to ask us what we wanted to learn, we only remembered some things and forgot others. We, for example, asked them to teach us about vegetable farming, but did not ask them to teach us enough about pest control and management, we only asked for that training after we saw our vegetables being attacked (18-k2).

Much as this could have been a mistake on the part of the facilitators, it also highlights the potential of participatory programme implementation going astray if the facilitators fail to apply effective dialogue and explore the actual concerns of the learners.

8.8.4 Multiplicity of activities

Although farmers constituted the bulk of the community, not all of them took farming as their main activity. In many households, agriculture was just one of the many other activities in which people engaged and more often than not was a lesser contributor to the household income. In such cases, even when people attended training, implementation was not guaranteed. A number of people were traders/shop keepers, food vendors, civil servants or employees of the local government. In Kiteme, for example, men were engaged almost fulltime in the mango trade during the mango season; in other communities they were either trading in coffee or foodstuffs or transporting them to the urban centres. Out of the sixty farmers I interviewed, only thirteen said that they entirely depended on agriculture. Others were engaged in multiple enterprises, the commonest of which, were brewing and distilling of beer by women, and food trade and transportation by men. This seemed to represent a key strategy for the diversification of livelihood to reduce their vulnerability. It became clear to me that VEDCO had probably not considered the fact that its programme was only one of the many agendas communities had to deal with, whereby they have to prioritise as they decide how to take action.

While farming featured as the commonest activity in the district, it was by no means the most enjoyable one. Many people farmed as a last resort and were ready to escape out of it immediately there was any meaningful alternative. The youths, in particular, saw farming as too demanding in terms of energy, and money, yet taking too long to generate returns which, according to them were also very unpredictable.

Some come to attend for the sake of listening, e.g. if you teach them to dig a hole for planting banana, separate from black soils, he sees it as cumbersome and a wastage of time. Telling them to reduce the number of suckers on a banana plant, they see it as wastage. People don't want to be troubled. This is mainly the youth that don't want to implement, many of these are charcoal makers, coffee traders and tomato growers. Some people, especially the hard working youth, normally come and ask how we do our own things and we guide them, some go and implement but others don't (21k-2)

8.8.5 Changes in VEDCO's focus and method of operation

VEDCO started on a social welfare foundation, with goals and interests geared towards addressing the social conditions of people to improve their welfare in the aftermath of socio-political strife. VEDCO's current programme however, emphasised economic empowerment of households by engaging in agriculture as a business. In order to cope with this demand, farmers

were introduced to the idea of borrowing from RUCREF (Rural Credit Finance), VEDCO's micro finance section. Many farmers saw this as a major breakthrough in their perennial lack of finances, which had consistently undermined progress. Unfortunately, attractive as this development appeared, it had major limitations, which began to unfold with time.

Farmers took loans, which became very difficult to pay due to the micro-finance conditionalities and policies. For instance, borrowers were only offered a two-week grace period before beginning to pay back on a weekly basis. VEDCO partners rooted in a peasant farming background had thought they would only start to pay after producing and selling their produce. The lenders' view was that those borrowing should already have been generating some income, which would help them begin paying immediately (hence the concept of 'active poor'). This was not the case with VEDCO's partners and probably not with most people engaged in small-scale farming. Several issues emerged from this situation; some farmers confessed to embarking on the intensive use of chemical fertilisers in particular DAP, NPK, UREA and several pesticides to be able to produce fast and meet the debtor's demands. These were, in most cases, commercialising farmers. What VEDCO might have failed to understand was the fact that the dividing line between the so-called commercialising farmers and other ordinary peasants in the food security category was very thin both in actual economic status and mind-set. To me, all were still peasants at heart, and expecting them to quickly transform and abide by the vagaries of the modern world of commerce was inappropriate.

After a bad start, some farmers had to think twice. One of the prominent farmers, who had participated in the initial borrowing, told me that together with his wife they had agreed never to borrow money for farming "even if the loans are available" and according to him that is how they had managed to keep farming without worries. This puts a big question mark on the future of poverty alleviation based on micro financing poor farmers as stipulated in Uganda's Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (MAAIF & MFPED 2000).

For commercialising farmers, production was not only aimed at the local market, but the international market too. While targeting the local market did not constitute any big challenge, the international market did. The international market, unlike the local one, had clear quality standards, which were not only new to the local farmers, but also difficult to attain. Export farm products were expected to be spotlessly perfect; for example okra, chillies, hot pepper, dudi, passion fruits, avocados and pineapples were supposed to be of a particular size and with no

deformity whatsoever. To maintain such standards, required intensive training in quality control, which, among other things, called for some deliberate use of agro-chemicals and artificial fertilisers. It was, for instance, very difficult to grow okra, dudi and passion fruits of the required standard using organic manure and pesticides.

This was not all, as regards exporting; VEDCO did not have a well laid out system for exporting the products. They depended instead on different local and international exporting companies. The companies also had several weaknesses. It was not uncommon for them to ask farmers to assemble their products in a central place for collection and then fail to collect them, although these were highly perishable commodities. On such occasions, farmers lost their products, which some of them had used borrowed money to produce.

While one of the roles of VEDCO's Agriculture trade and marketing department was to access market information and avail it to partners, it largely failed to play this role. As a result, okra farmers incurred a very big loss between November 2000 and June 2001, when I left the field. The price of okra fell internationally but the poor farmers continued to produce and within four months the local price fell from \$1 to \$0.5 a kilogramme. This disaster could easily have been avoided if the farmers had known the production patterns of okra in the other parts of the world.

On the local marketing front, things were not very different either; farmers produced the same commodities, all of them targeting the same urban market, like all other similar farming communities nationwide. Whilst low production and productivity were being overcome as central problems of VEDCO's partners, marketing was still a problem, with some farmers not even confident enough to transport their commodities to urban centres as one farmer explained:

Some of us have a major limitation when it comes to marketing. We get problems. Others farm, but they cannot confidently go to Kampala to look for markets, yet the local buyers keep cheating us. You can imagine, last season I had to sell very good cabbages at 50-60 shillings each, yet these very people will sell the same cabbage at 350 shillings (46k-3).

8.9 FROM TIMID PEASANTS TO VIBRANT FARMERS

By its nature, participatory action research aims at transforming situations, social groups and individuals, enabling people to overcome limiting forces, regardless of source, motivation and intent. I spent the last days of my fieldwork reflecting with individual farmers and VEDCO staff on

the kind of transformation each individual had experienced as a result of his/her involvement in the participatory action research.

8.9.1 Farmers' point of view

To get the farmers views, I asked in what ways farmers' participation in VEDCO's programmes had influenced their lives as farmers and citizens of the community. My interest was to establish both the practical economic and psychosocial aspects of farmers' lives.

The dialogue I had with individual farmers revealed that despite the many challenges farmers had encountered during that period, there was evidence of positive transformation, in the way they performed as farmers, their outlook on life and levels of analysis of issues. Farmers had grown in terms of practical farming skills and other aspects like communication skills, critical thinking and analysis, self-evaluation, openness and their visions on life.

The most obvious form of empowerment was in terms of practical knowledge and skills in farming. All the sixty farmers I spoke with confirmed that they had gained some practical knowledge and skills in sustainable agriculture and were actually using them (see table 8.3). Farmers proudly told me how they had applied the skills and knowledge in different ways (see Box 8.6).

Box 8.6. Some examples of farmers' perceived gains from the training

The only way I can tell you how well the training was conducted is by showing you my gardens. There is nothing we learnt that I have not applied. Even people come to consult me now on several things about agriculture. I have been teaching people about clonal coffee, compost making, vegetable growing and banana management, many people have been attracted by my gardens here. When they look at my harvest, they wonder how I managed to raise such good crops on such bad soils. I can plant crops all the year round and it really surprises my neighbours. They used to think I was running mad when I destroyed my compound and turned it into a vegetable garden, but now they are the same people coming to inquire how I grow such good vegetables (28k-3).

If you visit my garden, you will be able to see how much I have benefited. People usually see and wonder where I got such knowledge and skills in farming. They taught us that it was not beneficial to plant for the sake of it, but rather to plant in an orderly manner. In addition plant short-term crops in between, which makes one earn an income while at the same time waiting for those ones taking long to grow. We were also able to learn from fellow farmers who had better experiences and we were able to know that even among us there were people we could learn from (17k-2).

The training approach was good. They would invite us at the community centre and attend the training activities. The trainers started in a good way by asking us questions about the topic, and then they would start from what we have said to give us what they had prepared. The thing I liked most was the use of our language and local materials. They also arranged for practical sessions and exposures to farmers who were already doing well. Visiting farmers like Mr Kizza of Zirowwe was a very big challenge for me which actually made me believe that I can also do something in my small way (15k-1).

VEDCO offered us some very good training about the value of farming, which challenged me so much. They took us out on an exposure visit, I was able to conclude that farmers are not meant to be poor, people once they decide to get serious, and from that day I have never been the same again. In this exposure visit, I saw for myself the different ways of watering, using watering cans, small jerry cans and polythene bags. I saw how one could use limited land to produce and satisfy his subsistence and economic needs. Some of us have a major limitation. When it comes to marketing we get problems; others farm, but they cannot confidently go to Kampala to look for markets, yet the local buyers keep cheating us. You can imagine, last season I had to sell very good cabbages at 50-60 shillings each, yet these very people will sell the same cabbage at 350 shillings (46k-3).

These views represent many similar ones raised by different farmers. A close look at the views reveals a broad range of issues. Apart from the long list of skills and knowledge farmers acknowledge to have gained from the training, we also witness some interesting farmer-related trends in the community. The narrative by (28k-3) is, in itself, an implied revolution, not only in the life of the farmer, but also the community in general; the views by (46k-3) confirm this. In his words we can hear a transformed man.

The narrated ability to apply different skills, attract and train others, the self-discovery of the unused potential and capacity of the farmers, the capacity to manipulate the seasons and farm all year round, the feeling of being challenged to do something good in 'one's small way', the realisation of the possibility of things formerly considered impossibilities and the sense of pride and confidence with which they are narrated tell of empowered minds and personalities. Farmers not only grew in knowledge and skills, but also confidence, self-esteem, self-reliance, and awareness of their dignity and rights as respectable people not to be bullied and pushed around by VEDCO's inconsistency. There was a major contrast when one compares the views of the same farmers referred to in sections 6.3.1, 6.3.2 with what comes out in this chapter. Transformation among farmers was also manifested in their ability to critically analyse their situations and to engage in a critical dialogue about important issues. The interesting thing about the reported change was that it cut across the different groups of farmers. There were visible achievements among all actors, but, to some of the poorer farmers, the changes were actual miracles (see appendix 8.1). The extension workers confirmed that a number of farmers had actually undergone a clear process of transformations both practically and psychosocially. Extension workers (see Box 8.7) narrated interesting work experiences that confirm the picture raised by the farmers above. They saw the new move by farmers to seek assistance from extension workers to address their problems; willingness to contribute money to support training workshops; and being able to look for markets for their produce as a new trend towards working together.

The programme coordinator in charge of sustainable agriculture narrated a story that clearly illustrates the metamorphosis from timid peasants to vibrant farmers (see Box 8.8). The explanation gives a useful insight into the challenges of transformation; it also helps to bring forward the different dimensions of the change process, but most importantly it challenges us to rethink our own assumptions about change in community contexts.

8.9.2 Extension workers' point of view

There was clear evidence that extension workers had also undergone key transformations, not only in terms of knowledge and skills, but also self-confidence. Extension workers confessed that they had become better facilitators, knowing that it is human not to know everything and have stopped blaming themselves if they cannot answer farmers' questions. The tendency to believe in carrying a pre-prepared learning 'package' to learners had also been abandoned. They have learnt to develop sessions with learners within the community and jointly facilitate them. Extension workers did not only learn to accept positive criticism from others, which they used not to do in the past, but also to carryout self-assessments. I also observed that their interaction with management, including the executive director, had become more collegial and decisions were no longer imposed. Some extracts from the interviews I held with extension workers (Box 8.9) illustrate a number of the examples mentioned.

Box 8.7. Extension workers' views of farmers' transformation (n=6)

There are several changes I have seen in the farmers I have worked with since I began a year and half ago. The farmers are more confident in a positive way. As I said earlier, I have been using a participatory approach where every-body in the group has had opportunity to host the entire group at his home as a learning venue. It was very difficult to convince a person to host a learning session let alone facilitate it. These days they compete to host the sessions. It was also very difficult for any of them to come out and talk about their experiences or ask questions, but slowly by slowly they have picked up the practice. Another important change I have seen is in the area of self-reliance; people are now willing to contribute money for activities like exposure visits. They also accept to pay for planting materials like banana suckers, coffee clones, grafted fruit trees and nitrogen fixing trees. In the past they used to complain that they were too poor to buy these things, that they should be given for free but when we insisted that it is only those willing to sacrifice that would work with us, they changed completely! There are some cases of dependency, but the majority have now transformed a lot in this respect. Farmers have also started to come to our field office to consult and report their concerns where they want us to help them. They can even contribute for their lunch during training, yet in the past they used to quarrel, and even abandon meetings when we refused to provide lunch. Farmers have also begun to challenge our way of doing things. On many occasions during the PRA and other meetings they have criticised us on such issues as late coming and failure to follow up work plans. At first farmers were very worried about things like where to buy pesticides and to market their products, especially horticultural products and they used to look to VEDCO as responsible to get them markets since VEDCO had trained them in the production skills. These days they look for their markets, others have formed groups to collectively hire vehicles to transport their produce either to markets in Kampala or Wobulenzi town. I think this is sufficient evidence of change on the part of farmers (EXT I).

Well, they have also learnt, I can see our farmers very confident when sharing their individual experiences during training, second, these farmers have now learnt to look for us rather than waiting in their homes and complaining that we have abandoned them. These days whenever they have a problem that requires our assistance they find a way of getting to us. They also know that there are many problems they can solve among themselves without necessarily waiting for us. There is a new trend of interaction between farmers to solve their problems, these days people have accepted that there are some of their colleagues in the community with useful knowledge and skills and they do make use of such people very often. Even their level of selfishness has gone down, I remember when I had just began working with them, it was very difficult to convince individuals to share knowledge or anything with their friends. One day they told me their cabbages had been affected by certain moths and caterpillar, they had used all local concoctions and failed and I advised them to buy a bottle of cypermethrin, but none of them had enough money for a one litre bottle. I advised them to contribute money and buy one and share, but they all refused and one of them later told me that there are no blessings in sharing things 'in fact people take your blessings'. The story is now very different, however. Many of them find it more economically viable to collaborate with others. A group of three has asked to find out the price for a good spray pump. The spirit of dependency is also dying out, these days when we mobilise them for training they come ready to buy themselves lunch and they don't expect transport refund, as had been the case when we began (EXT II).

There are some farmers who have changed in their way of doing things. I now find them very cooperative whenever I have something to do with them. Many farmers realise the value of the extension worker and look for me when they need assistance. This was not the case in the past. In terms of income, many of the farmers who have been keen on what we have taught and implemented have registered great changes in their incomes. A person like Kiwanuka of Ggavu and Kalanzi of Nkuluze are good examples in this respect. Another person who has had a tremendous transformation is Nannyange of Nkokonjeru, this woman is a poor widow with five orphans. Last year she participated in the training on vegetable growing, after which she grew cabbages, green pepper and eggplants. She was able to harvest, sell and raise enough money to buy a calf to avoid begging for cow dung to make compost. Kalanzi has expanded his banana plantation more than three times from the original. There are also other people like Januario who now sells a pickup of cabbage every week. What I can say is that the serious ones have really gained (EXT III).

Box 8.8 Co-ordinator's explanation of the farmer transformation process

Co-ordinator: When I joined VEDCO in 1996, it was much worse than now. We had to market the organisation and the programme because it was very young and people were looking at it differently, especially the local councils like e.g. when we submitted a budget of 90 million shillings to the LC as our contribution to the development of the area, the feeling of the Local councillors was that such money should be given to the council so that they could manage it, not knowing that the money was to be used to run several things including the vehicle, pay salaries and other things.

In those days, if you did not go to hunt for people, they would not come, so we had to run after them to ensure that we trained them and then followed them up to ascertain that the agriculture practices were adopted. We were giving them micro finance, which they had to use to generate income and bank it on their joint account, but they used to fear to take money for banking, arguing that the bank would steal it. They would hold on to it until we convinced them that nobody would steal their money. But I think things are changing, it is a gradual process and the process takes some time, and about ten years is a short period. For me as a person who has stayed for some time I see there is change. Because these days you can get people coming from the community and say please we have this problem, can you come and help us, which never used to happen. I will give you an example; Steven was in charge of marketing and introduced passion fruit growing and rabbit rearing. When the passion fruit got ready they brought baskets of passion fruit to VEDCO and said, this is your passion fruit, "you are the people who told us to grow them you should know where to market it for us, we do not know". We used to divide it among staff and gave them very little money, but these days even when we want to buy it we cannot get it. Another problem we had was the rabbits, we had introduced them for marketing purposes and most people took it up because they are very easy to rear, but when they were ready for the market, they came with them saying these are your rabbits tell us where to take them. When we went there to explain that the price had gone down for the market is not available at the moment, that lady in Bakijjulula, called Nakamya let all the rabbits run away and I found them running and she told me "since you don't have a market and me I don't eat rabbits, I let them go," but these days it is a different story. Even if you wanted them, you would need to book and spend a lot of time waiting, yet the price is also very high. A rabbit goes for 5000 shillings. In addition, these very people have even learnt to eat the rabbits I believe that is positive change and a form of empowerment. So I think it is gradual; maybe within twenty years there will be greater changes than we even anticipate.

The way we judge progress at times is very unfair because we make judgements according to what we have seen, but forget where people came from. When we talk to people about what has been happening in the PLAN areas, they are very disappointing, but when you hear the stories of the people themselves, you can actually see that to them, bad as their situation may appear they have made big strides in the positive direction. There is a lot of transformation which has already taken place; there are land marks in their lives which they can mention to you which are big achievement. For instance someone tells you that he or she no longer spends money on vegetables, food, pesticides or fertilisers. If I take myself as the standard measure, these things mean nothing but if I look at a person who could barely have two meals a day these are great achievements.

I think our other problem in the organisation is documentation, because, if I can give one example, in 1996 when we were in Nyimbwa there were groups of Nubians in a village called Asuru. Those people got a loan, and whenever a person went there to ask them about the progress of their project, they would say "bumyu bwafudde" (*the rabbits died*) business "takola bulungi" (*business is doing badly*), until those were written off as bad debts and then we sat down and said what shall we do? We developed a new strategy of merging these groups into bigger ones to ensure that peer pressure would force those weak ones to pay and we would not release any more funds until all of them had paid up.

The situation was equally bad for the agricultural programme. We used to train farmers and even demonstrate how to plant bananas for example, but we would go back after one week and find that even the banana suckers we had uprooted for planting, not even a single one had been planted, until this gentleman Miiro went around doing the actual planting. He would at least plant one full line of banana suckers out of the expected ten, which embarrassed the farmers and they began responding. But after he had left, now we can see his impact. Everywhere we pass, they show us good banana plantations, all of which are attributed to Miiro. Like when you are going to Musaale there is a man with a very good banana plantation mixed with pineapples, he is called Rwanbibu. He is one of those Miiro literally forced to plant bananas, but today he is one of the best farmers in the parish. So it is gradual; somebody takes time to realise the value and when they do realise, they actually take off very well. At the time we are trying to work with them, they may not realise the value of what we try to pass on to them, it only occurs to them later in days to come. Agriculture is one activity, which actually takes time to transform, especially in a context like the one of these people who had actually resigned.

Box No 8.9 Extension workers' views of their own transformation

My own way of doing things has tremendously changed. I think I am a more improved facilitator than I was before engaging in the PRA and AR training. The PRA training, in particular, helped us to learn to work with communities as equal partners. It has also taken some burden off my mind and actions, I know I am not expected to have all answers to all problems and I also know the community has much more knowledge of their environment than me. This is a big relief to me as an extension worker. My approach was very different at the beginning. I went to the farmers to teach them and taught them as I thought was most appropriate, but I was often disappointed when they did not practice what I had taught. These days I don't do anything without considering the views of the farmers. I have also learnt to assess myself, it was really difficult for me to accept challenges from even colleagues, but these days, after you introduced personal and collective assessment in our review meetings I have changed a lot. And I think it is making my work less tense, I used to be tensed up all the time, especially when my parish was to be visited by the manager. I felt like I was under criminal investigation. I was not confident. I would feel like requesting farmers to talk good of me before the bosses, but now the work I do talks for itself. So I really feel there has been some major transformations in my way of doing things. The only problem I find is that much as my skills are improving, the pressure to meet organisational targets is still making me fail to do my best. I find myself often doing some work superficially. And the organisation does not seem to see that pursuing targets without considering other factors like farmers' other commitments and the duration people take to get convinced and see the value in some of the things we promote as very vital for sustainable success (Ext III).

The training you gave us in action research has helped me to look at my way of doing things. These days I always try to come back and ask myself why are these people behaving the way they do? Am I doing the right thing or is there a problem with my approach? I try to think about those things you talked about which hinder success in learning. ***Is it not possible that there could be some other causes of the differences in response by farmers?*** At the beginning we did not examine the social and economic backgrounds of the communities. There are those with the economic muscle to implement and there are those without, some, for example, lack land to work on, others don't look at agriculture as the main economic activity and others whose needs are not met by the training we conduct (Ext 11).

One of the most obvious yet important changes has been in the way I approach people in the community. My respect for farmers has increased, my patience and willingness to listen to their problems has also increased. In the past, my main concern was how many farmers I visited, but these days I am more concerned with the quality of assistance I give to the farmer. I have also learnt to generate information from farmers and even to assess my own performance. I can tell when the farmers are not satisfied with my method of work and adjust; I also feel confident to meet people regardless of the numbers. I no longer fear challenge from farmers. I can accept them and use them as sources of learning for the group and myself. The other thing I learnt is to look at myself as a learner not a teacher, to accept that I can be inadequate in some of the areas. When I thought I was supposed to have answers to all questions whenever I failed, I felt very low (EXT 1).

Concluding comment

The chapter marks the end of my presentation of data, but it is not the end of the action research process I had initiated in VEDCO and the community. I unfortunately had to stop the process before the conclusion of the entire programme to write up the thesis. In this chapter, I have presented data on the second and last PAR cycle of the study. It has illustrated the deliberate efforts we took to create opportunities for effective participatory programme implementation. The chapter shows the dynamics of change and reiterates the influence of contextual factors in the policy implementation process. It also reveals that there is great potential for growth and transformation for the community and the NGO, once the intentions are harmonised and deliberate efforts made to achieve it. Most importantly, it illustrates that the greatest obstacle to participatory programme implementation is not only the physical problems people face, like

limited resources, but also the absence of the will and commitment to act in a participatory manner. With the will and commitment, it is possible for some positive change to occur. At another level, the chapter brings out useful insights on the tensions and challenges related to the attainment of environmental sustainability in a state of poverty, empowerment amidst dependency, contradictions between economic and environmental sustainability and the pains and joys of transformation, which are further analysed in chapter nine.

CHAPTER NINE

EMERGING ISSUES, CHALLENGES, LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS

9.0 INTRODUCTION

In this study, I aimed to establish how participatory methodologies recommended in the National Environmental Policy were being used in the community-based environmental education and development programmes to achieve Uganda's national goal of sustainable development. I also investigated the contextual factors influencing the manner in which these methodologies are used.

This chapter discusses the key issues, tensions and challenges in the use of participatory methodologies in a community-based educational programme related to the national environmental policy. It also states the conclusions and recommendations of the study, which I have called lessons and implications. The chapter consists of six sections. The first section analyses contextual issues related to the community, the second analyses VEDCO's institutional context and dynamics, the third looks at issues related to the donor economy, the fourth section analyses the contradictions in the different components of the educational programme that formed the case study, the fifth section discusses participation and the use of participatory methods to implement programme activities and section six analyses the relationship between development and environmental sustainability.

9.1 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS RELATED TO COMMUNITY

Communities do not exist in isolation. They are part of wider socio-economic, political and cultural networks and contexts. In the case of this study, it became increasingly clear, both during the study and the analysis of the data, that contextual factors did have a major influence on the use of participatory methods and approaches to implement Uganda's environmental policy within a community context. I saw the factors listed below as key obstacles to the planned participatory implementation of programme activities related to the National Environmental Policy in a community setting. The main issues were:

- a) The complex notion of communities
- b) Gender issues
- c) The poverty scenario
- d) Inequitable distribution of land and the environmental degradation.

9.1.1 The complex notion of communities

VEDCO's assumptions and actions in the Sustainable agriculture and food security programme seemed to suggest that the organisation viewed the community as one undifferentiated entity (Watts 2000). The assumption that farmers would respond positively to a generalised training programme (sections 5.4.2, 5.4.2.2) and that they would readily cooperate to develop and maintain parish and village-based demonstration gardens are good examples in this regard. These assumptions overshadowed the realities about the communities as heterogeneous, consisting of people with varying needs, interests, goals, aspirations, power, opportunities and abilities. Practically, the community consisted of many different sub-communities, based on wealth; gender, age, family set-ups, interests and experience (see section 4.2, and also appendix 4.2).

The differentiation was also reflected in the interests and ambitions of different villagers in the programme, some of which often conflicted, at times leading to counterproductive contradictions. Some people, for instance, participated in programme activities hoping they would be given some handouts, but dropped out when they did not receive the handouts, and even discouraged others from working with VEDCO (see sections 8.8.1 and 8.8.2). In the same vein, parish supervisors selected friends and relatives to be trained as lead farmers hoping that such positions were to be accompanied by material benefits (see section 6.5.1). Such lead farmers, failed to perform the roles they were trained for and many of them pulled out of the programme, in spite of the resources invested in their training. These selfish acts reflect the complex social dynamics at play in the community that undermined the anticipated participatory implementation of programme activities. Thus, while VEDCO expected people to work towards a common goal, many of them had private agendas and interests.

At another level, even as farmers in the same village, the people were interested in different crops (see section 8.3.2). Some farmers were interested in traditional cash crops, despite their declining economic value, while others preferred more seasonal food and horticultural crops. It was partly the failure to meet farmers' diverse interests that undermined the implementation of VEDCO's original programme as discussed in chapter six.

Individualism and selfishness were key obstacles to the implementation of VEDCO's programmes (see section 8.8.2 also see Box 8.7 EXT II). There was a fascinating coexistence

between a strong spirit of dependency and self-pity, side-by-side with clear individualism and selfishness. The very people who shunned attempts towards cooperation and collective problem-solving were not only eager to receive, but also in the forefront in demanding free handouts from VEDCO, and cursed whenever none came their way (see section 8.8.1).

The individualism in this community contradicts the common tendency to associate poor people with communalism. While there is historical evidence of cooperation among people to execute communal projects, in what was referred to as “Bulungi bwa nsi” (*meaning: “for the good of the country”*) among the Baganda³⁴, this cooperation was not without coercion. It was a traditional obligation by every member of the Baganda society to participate in communal activities like keeping roads clean, maintaining wells and other public facilities (Nang’endo, 2001, Roscoe, 1911). This was enforced by the traditional chief and mobilisation was done by sounding an official drum “saagala agalamidde” (*literary meaning “everybody up!”*). Whenever that drum was sounded, nobody was exempted from this work, except the sick and the invalid, and failure to comply was a punishable offence. Beyond this collective obligation, however, people lived independently as individuals, farmed their land and produced as individual families. Again this did not mean total freedom as the local government represented by the chiefs, had strict rules about individual household responsibilities like ensuring that every household took responsibility for its food security. The purpose of this background is to illustrate that traditional communalism was in most cases imposed by the traditional structures. This point finds support in the writing of Giddens (1991). Giddens argues that people in traditional communities lived in situations which were firmly controlled by traditions which offered people little scope for independent action and as he puts it: “individuals were relatively powerless to alter or escape from their surrounding social circumstances. ... The hold of tradition was almost unchallengeable...” (Giddens 1991:192). The writings by Chambers (1997), Mshana (1992), Watts (2000) and Zerner (2000), also support these findings. Watts for example argues that community is “an extraordinarily dense social object ... yet one that is rarely subject to critical scrutiny ... is often invoked as a unity, as an undifferentiated thing, with intrinsic powers, that speaks with a single voice ...” (Watts, 2000:37).

While it might be true that the culture of the people in the community studied had a hand in perpetuating individualism, the phenomenon could also represent a process of transition

³⁴ Baganda are the majority of the people in Luwero district. The ethnic group constitutes the people who used to make up the old Kingdom of Buganda.

towards capitalist ideals, which are part of the modernisation drive that came with colonialism and has been perpetuated even after. Interestingly, despite the selfishness and individualism, there was also a strong sense of community-spirit among some community members, as observed in the assistance to the sick, invalids and those in trouble (see section 4.2.1). These factors made the communities more complex than VEDCO imagined which had major implications with regard to policy implementation and education in community contexts.

Lessons learnt:

The first major lesson to be learnt from this study is that the assumption about communities as homogenous and ready to collaborate for a common good is an over-simplification of the nature of communities, and the dynamics that characterise them. Similar as people may appear in their poverty and in other ways, great individual differences exist in outlook, interests, aspirations, capacities, experiences, cultures and histories.

Secondly, diversity is a fact of life that cannot be overlooked, ignored or wished away. Such diversities have the potential to impact programme activities in different ways and lead to regrettable repercussions, if diversities are not taken care of during programme planning and implementation.

Implications:

This implies that policy makers, development planners and practitioners develop positive strategies for addressing diversities at the different levels of society. In the case of this study, (chapter 8), we collectively developed a strategy that considered community diversity by focusing on participants' individual interests first, and later grouping those with similar interests together to address their collective interests and problems, which produced positive outcomes (see sections 8.5, 8.6).

Secondly, while it is good for every individual in the community to get involved in development programmes, it is not possible for everybody to participate positively. Contradictory factors arising from the diverse nature of communities will always prevent people from participating positively in programme implementation, some to the extent of opposing and frustrating programme goals. Development planners and practitioners should therefore be aware of this and always try to work with those who are willing to participate and aim to achieve positive results that will attract the defiant ones back into the programme. In other words, programme

implementers should never feel disappointed when only part of the community participates in programme activities. Participation does not always mean everybody being involved and playing a positive role; refusal to take part and contradicting the programme agenda can be useful for programme growth.

9.1.2 Gender issues

Gender is one of the attributes of communities that make them complex. Findings on gender relations (see section 4.2.3) demonstrated that gender relations within households and the community in general were central to the way the policy activities were being implemented within the community. While women were the main tillers of the land, and frequently participated in VEDCO's programme activities, in most cases they neither owned the land, nor had full powers to use it to implement the sustainable agricultural practices they had learnt. It often took a lot of negotiation for female farmers to begin using land freely, and in most cases such freedom only occurred when the women were to use the land for household food production, or in a joint project with the husband, in which case she would be the lesser partner.

There were also gender-related conflicts with direct influence on the implementation of policy-related programme activities. The household power equation was skewed in favour of the men. Traditional gender relations dictated that women as wives were under the control of their husbands, which led to a situation whereby any changes that seemed to tilt the relationship in favour of the woman were seen as potentially dangerous to male power and as such worth stopping. The two cases of women who excelled in implementing sustainable agricultural and became threats to their husbands (see section 4.2.3) are a case in point. The divorcing of the two women exposed some of the underlying weaknesses in VEDCO's programme. Whilst VEDCO's goal was economic empowerment of smallholder farmers, the organisation overlooked the gender implications of economic empowerment without accompanying social and political empowerment of the people involved; yet the three are inseparable. This makes a mockery of the entire organisational and policy goal of emancipation, if that emancipation is geared towards narrowly defined ends. It is also a lesson as regards community development planning for while it is true that the men erred in behaving the way they did, planners had also not been sensitive enough to envisage conflict in a situation where the empowerment of women would threaten some men with imminent powerlessness.

The two cases above represented just a small sample of the contradictory gender relations in the community. In the case of some women, lack of power and security over land, even after the deaths of the husbands, or restricted access (being tied to production for family consumption (social reproduction)) pose a great challenge to the implementation of policies associated with natural resource management and land in particular. Without control, women as the main users of land can find it difficult to commit their time and energy given the insecurity invoked by acts of violence like the ones above. This revealed a deep-seated source of powerlessness that was not being addressed by the programme. Cases where husbands prevented wives from participating (see section 8.7.2) or let them participate, but denied them freedom to decide on the implementation of what they had learnt point to the immense transformative effort required to bring gender to the forefront of policy implementation within community. The introduction of farming as a business, also had gender implications at household level, related to the distribution of land between food production and commercial farming (see sections 8.8.5 and 8.8.6) with some men trying to convert more land towards commercial farming at the expense of domestic food production.

The selection of distant venues for workshops (see section 8.2.1.4), the late arrival of facilitators and late release of participants were other gender insensitive practices with a high potential to lead not only to domestic conflicts, but also jeopardising the well-being of families. Some mothers dropped out of the programmes because they had to choose between attending the programmes and preparing meals for their children. This directly undermined policy implementation at community level, given the position of women as the main tillers of land and as such most likely to implement programme activities. The above notwithstanding, it should be noted that there were also many supportive husbands whose interaction with their wives was exemplary and who registered remarkable success in the activities they implemented (see section 8.7.2).

Lessons learnt:

The above analysis demonstrates that gender inequalities and gender insensitive planning are detrimental to the effective implementation of programmes within community contexts. With particular regard to the implementation of Uganda's environmental policy at community level, the potential of such inequalities to undermine the intended goals is enormous. Secondly, the above analysis shows that it is impossible to effect sustainable economic empowerment without social, cultural and political empowerment.

Implications:

There is therefore a need for NGOs, government and other institutions to effect deliberate gender sensitive planning, and implementation of policies and community-based programmes. Policy planners, in particular, need to be sensitive to both the practical and strategic gender needs of women to avoid scenarios where partial empowerment is achieved at the expense of other forms of empowerment. It is also imperative that in responding to community problems, community development programmes adopt a more integrated and holistic approach to avoid narrow definitions of problems that lead to programmes that only partially address the problems.

At another level, education and development programmes need to be cognisant of the contextual influences in/on communities and consider how these will influence the programmes, and in turn be influenced by them. It will help to reduce the occurrence of the 'unintended outcomes' like divorce following 'empowerment' in sustainable agricultural activities.

9.1.3 The poverty scenario

Poverty emerged as a major limitation to the translation of policy into practical actions at community level (see sections 4.2 and 8.7.1). The poverty situation was a manifestation of a broad spectrum of forces and dimensions (see Table 4.5) at the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, the 1981-86 war (see section 4.1.2) was seen as the foundation of the current poverty in the district for it marked the beginning of a long period of deprivation, which people are still struggling to escape without much success. High levels of poverty associated with the war have been entrenched by other local factors. The coffee wilt disease is a case in point. The disease (table 4.5), which dries coffee trees, remains a real tragedy to the farmers and has left many, especially the older people, without a sound alternative. Many such farmers grew coffee as their sole source of income. As stated in section 8.2.1.3, efforts to re-establish the wilt-resistant clonal coffee have been frustrating in some areas. The traditional Robusta coffee did not need as much water as clonal coffee, which has to be watered during the dry season.

Also at the national level, the change of government policy regarding crop marketing under trade liberalisation has compounded the problem for coffee growers. While in the past, the government used to regulate coffee prices, with market liberalisation, the government left all

responsibility for pricing in the hands of traders and market forces. Farmers saw this as an abdication of state responsibility to its citizens, for according to them, traders would never allow themselves to lose, as one put “omusubuzi tafiirwa bwebamuseera, nga naye anyiga ffe” (*meaning: a trader cannot make a loss, when the price goes down, he squeezes us harder to compensate*”).

At the international level, the coffee market has been very unstable over the past decade (Oxfam, 2002), which has constituted a double tragedy for these rural farmers. The case of coffee and poverty is important in exposing a number of facts: a) that poverty in this community is not entirely a local matter, but part of the contradictions of the international capitalist economic system, over which not only the people are powerless but also the states with economies that depend on the production on primary agricultural commodities; b) it also demonstrates the dangers associated with the untransformed post-colonial economies that have perpetuated economic structures that always seem to work to the advantage of the rich capitalist nations and corporate organisations, and to the detriment of poor countries and their people; and c) dependency on commodities over which the seller does not determine the price not only undermines the economy, but also the confidence of the people in the political and economic structures of their countries.

The alternatives available for diversification were not necessarily free from the limitations that affected coffee. The introduction of high value crops as a strategy for diversification of income sources was confronted with problems of crop management; quality control and marketing (see section 8.8.6). The alternatives were not easy for the ordinary farmers, and demanded more than what the common farmer could afford. While people had enough knowledge and skills in coffee production, they had to be taught to produce the high value crops; these crops require more intensive and strict production procedures to maintain the quality demanded on the international market. This calls for discipline and willingness to learn and remains a big challenge to the poor farmers in the rural areas, who have always produced for the local market, with a different view of quality. In fact, some of the quality standards are not only difficult to achieve but also confusing and unrealistic to the local farmers. Exporters, for example, wanted small size okra, small mangoes and avocados that contradicted farmers' views of what was good. The other challenge associated with the high value crops like okra, chillies, hot pepper and dudi is that they have a limited local market, as they were not widely consumed locally. VEDCO tried to address these problems through the Sustainable agriculture

and food security programme, but, because of poverty, many of these farmers could not afford the alternatives (section 8.7.1).

This poverty scenario represents the irony of trade liberalisation and the limitations associated with the concepts of free trade and globalisation (Sachs 2002). While free trade is based on the assumption that there should be free mobility of “goods, capital and people” in the world, (Sachs 2002:56), in reality, it only works in favour of the wealthy industrialised countries, which move freely into poor countries’ markets, but put unnecessary and unrealistic ‘quality’ regulations on imported products that mitigate against poorer countries, and prevent farmers from finding a foothold in European and other northern markets. Sachs argues “the stubborn resistance of the North to open its societies to people and products from the South is a powerful sign that full economic globalisation is indeed impossible” (ibid: 57). This spells more troubles and deeper suffering for the poor, as the roots of poverty become more international and less under the influence and capacity of local institutions and governments to handle.

There were also some factors exacerbating poverty among people that seemed neither institutional, policy nor structural. While it is a common practice in the development discourse informed by a critical ideology to associate poverty with exploitation, oppression, deprivation and denial by capitalist exploiters, my involvement with poor people at grass-root level gave an additional dimension to this. There was poverty induced by what people referred to as *Bunafu na bugayavu* (meaning: laziness and ineptitude). This was common among male youth and some older men. These people did not necessarily lack land or other means of production, they attended all training courses, they looked physically strong and healthy and many were more educated than ordinary villagers, but they did not engage in serious productive work. Some people associated this form of poverty with weak leadership within communities. Others saw it as a negative result of the participatory democracy advocated by government (section 8.8.3).

Lessons learnt:

The foregoing discussion provides some useful lessons on the nature of poverty and its different dimensions. The key lesson is that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which is often wrongly diagnosed by governments and development agencies. In the case of this community, reliance on coffee as a sole cash crop, and the war, which ended fifteen years ago, were only part of the causes of poverty among farmers; the international economic system that arbitrarily decides on prices of poor countries’ commodities compounded the problem. Thus, as

long as the international trade arrangements remain the same there is little hope for meaningful and sustainable solutions to the poverty situation. That is why even when farmers switched to high value crops, the same problems that led to the decline in the value of coffee haunted them.

Implications:

Because the causes of poverty are multi-dimensional, solutions to address them must also be multi-dimensional taking into consideration both the local and international and dimensions.

At the local level, the government, NGOs and private sector, should undertake deliberate efforts to build capacity in marketing and trade negotiations in order to be able to negotiate favourable terms of trade, accessing information on markets and production systems around the world so as to know who produces what, and when and who needs what, at what time. This can help poor countries to develop strategies that will enable them to take advantage of the local conditions to overcome some of the market-related obstacles. Uganda can for example take advantage of the favourable geographical and climatic conditions that allow two farming seasons of equal length in a year to produce for regional and international markets when others cannot. Specialisation in the production of organic products is one area from which farmers in a country like Uganda can easily benefit, without having to compete unfavourably, given the favourable climatic conditions.

At policy level, there is a need for congruent economic and trade policies, nationally and internationally, to support sustainable development efforts. In addition, different policies should be aligned not only to the spirit of sustainable development, but also poverty reduction, including the removal of market barriers for products from poor nations at the macro level. More efforts should be made at the macro level by multilateral organisations like the World Trade Organisation, continental initiatives like 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development' (NEPAD) and regional organisations like the SADC, the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Maghreb Union (UMA) to develop and implement policies that not only address poverty, but also emphasise development initiatives that are environmentally sustainable. New initiatives like NEPAD should avoid also recycling the old basic assumptions about poverty and development that have failed due to flawed underlying principles (see sections 2.2 and 2.2.1).

9.1.4 Inequitable distribution of land and environmental degradation

On the one hand, findings showed that land as the most important natural resource for farmers, was insufficient and inequitably distributed (see sections 4.2.1 and tables 4.4 and 4.5). This problem curtailed people's capacity to produce sufficient crops to meet their needs. Secondly, those with land to lend and hire out subjected the landless to many painful procedures that discouraged many people from farming (see section 4.2.3). Some of the conditions set by landowners bred a sense of insecurity for the landless and became a disincentive to sound land management and in turn a strong factor behind environmental degradation. Activities like charcoaling, brick making, and cutting trees for fuel wood, were often a response to land scarcity (see section 4.4, table 4.8). Farmers knowingly violated sustainable agricultural principles through actions like over-cultivation of land and intercropping of incompatible crops (see sections 6.4.2 and 8.7.1), just because they had insufficient land.

On the other hand, the above views on the scarcity of land notwithstanding, my feeling, informed by personal observations and interaction with farmers and extension workers, was that if the available land (3-5 acres per family) was well managed and maximally used, farmers would be able to generate enough income from the land and at least be able to meet their food security requirements. Part of the mismanagement was due to the limitations of the traditional cash crop-based economy, in which households reserved the larger parts of the little land available for coffee, a perennial crop (Babikwa 2002), thus subjecting the remaining part to over-cultivation and the resultant exhaustion.

The delay in the development and implementation of the National Land Policy has also contributed to the environmental problems. It took eight years from 1987, when research on land reform was commissioned, to 1995, when commitment to reform was declared in the national constitution and three more years to pass the Land Act of 1998. Although the policy enshrined in the National Constitution of 1995, and the 1998 Land Act (NEMA 2001) streamlined issues of land ownership and utilisation in principle, in practical terms, little had changed for the landless and those without security of land ownership. Issues of politics, culture and gender have continued to bog the implementation. The enactment of the Land Act was not accompanied by a Land-use policy and it has been criticised for failing to put in place strong provisions for equitable sharing of benefits of land and ownership amongst family members (NEMA 2001). The Land Policy had raised the hopes of poor farmers living insecurely on land as squatters by promising them certificates that would ensure their security,

but there was no evidence of its implementation four years after the passing of the act. Findings showed that such people have shown utmost reluctance to invest in the land and manage it effectively (section 8.7.1). These issues have had a direct influence on the implementation of the National Environmental Policy and the perpetuation of poverty.

Lesson learnt:

Government failure to implement land related policies plays a major role in undermining effective implementation of the National Environmental Policy. Secure access to land, no matter how little, is likely to boost effective management and utilisation of land. Secondly, dependence on traditional cash crops, which permanently occupy land, compounds the environmental degradation and frustrates efforts directed towards sustainable resource-use and management.

Implications:

There is a need to develop alternative economic strategies that will redeem land from permanent occupation by traditional cash crops like coffee, which are becoming increasingly unreliable as sources of income. There is also a need for better planning and more committed training on sustainable land use to increase productivity on small areas of land.

With regard to the slow implementation of the land policy, people should lobby government through NGOs, local councils and parliament to implement the National Land Policies at different levels of society.

9.2 VEDCO'S INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND DYNAMICS

The internal dynamics of VEDCO strongly influenced the implementation of programme activities. The use of participatory methods during implementation was undermined by, among other things, the organisation's bureaucratic structure, the history of the organisation, its vision and mission, and its dependency on donor funding.

9.2.1 Contradictory scenarios and related tensions

The organisation had a bureaucratic organisational structure (see diagram 5.1), which reflected an underlying technocratic style of management, thinking and aspirations. While it is true that VEDCO worked with local communities, it could not be regarded as an indigenous, community-based organisation for a number of reasons:

- a) VEDCO's origins (see section 5.1) as an association initiated by a group of university students implicitly gave it the aura of an organisation for the elite, which it had to take deliberate steps to breakdown in order to be fully integrated, but never did;
- b) The initiators were 'developers' and 'transformers' with a mission to transform the community, on their terms and according to their vision (see sections 5.2, 7.1.2) (note that the vision and mission statements were developed without the involvement of the people who were supposed to be affected by the programme);
- c) The founders seemed more allied to the donors than to the communities probably because they apparently shared the ideology and vision of change for the community and secondly, the donors were willing to provide the money that VEDCO needed to fulfil the mission; and
- d) While VEDCO operated in the community, the personnel and spirit guiding the operations were more middle-class and, urban educated, than the rural semi-educated poor (see section 7.2.4.1).

These factors implied that VEDCO was not very different from other development organisations that were neither indigenous, nor community-based, contrary to what I had concluded at the beginning of the study (see section 3.7.3). Secondly, the organisation was changing into a private enterprise³⁵ in a bid to become economically sustainable and depend less on donor

³⁵ VEDCO is in the process of transforming into a private profit-making company with the Micro-finance section turning into a rural financing deposit-taking facility, Agric-Trade into a consultancy section to deal with marketing information services and research and technology development, leaving the Sustainable agriculture and extension section as the only one addressing community issues from a social service perspective.

funding. This orientation towards a corporate organisation affected its relationship with its own staff and the partner communities. Staff members became part of 'the human capital' hired to do a job, given terms of reference and clear targets to achieve within a specific period of time. Even the discourse and organisational culture changed to a more business-like managerialist approach (see sections 7.3.4 and 7.4). In a way, the trend towards more corporate goals pushed the organisation to behave in a top-down manner.

The contradiction here was that, in principle, VEDCO was committed to implementing a participatory programme in a community context in which members of the community were partners. In reality, VEDCO was an organisation founded by individuals (see section 5.1), not the community with interests and goals that the community probably knew nothing about. There was a tension between the founders' love to own, hang onto and control the organisation, on one side, and the exigencies of people-centred development to which the organisation had committed itself on the other. While people-centred development calls for shared ownership, exercise of power and control (Pretty, 1995 and Slocum *et al* 1995), in the case of VEDCO, the communities, as stakeholders did not have any control or rather influence on the organisation (see sections 7.3.4, 7.4). They were partners whose role in the partnership remained subordinate due to the historical reasons raised above.

The fact that VEDCO was implementing a programme meant to achieve emancipatory results was also paradoxical as the organisation was still struggling to develop the necessary transformation, as an organisation run on participatory democratic principles. VEDCO's adherence to the top-down technocratic managerial tendencies in some of its operations was a clear pointer to this anomaly. The technocratic approach deprived individual staff of the necessary confidence to act independently in the execution of their duties (see Box 7.4). This reduced staff effectiveness and even undermined capacity to own their actions and decisions.

9.2.2 VEDCO's development ideology

At another level, the development ideology pursued by VEDCO contradicted the spirit and goals of participatory development. The underlying technocratic development ideology depicted in the organisational vision and mission statements was manifested more concretely in the organisation's tendency to want to transform the community (see sections 5.2, 7.1.2 and 9.4.1.1). This was reminiscent of what critics of the economic growth and modernisation development paradigm have seen as the regrettable mission of the progress and economic

growth approach to development (Escobar 1997, Esteva 1999, Mshana 1992). Promoters of this view of development see modernisation as the only method capable of destroying archaic superstitions and relations, at whatever social, cultural and political cost(Escobar 1997). Development is seen as a top-down affair, in which the development experts seek to impose their view of the world on those who are poor and therefore considered ignorant. In this case, VEDCO was pursuing a development ideology that defines development technocratically as a process from above, and social life as:

... a technical problem, a matter of rational decision and management to be entrusted to that group of people – the development professionals whose specialised knowledge already qualified them for the task (Escobar 1997:91).

Whatever the rhetoric of participation and participatory development, the above economic and political thinking dictates a technocratic approach to addressing community problems (Castillo, 1983). My participation in VEDCO programmes for more than a year exposed me to experiences that confirmed the above scenario. Trying to implement sustainable development using participatory methods became difficult because VEDCO, the implementing agency, was pursuing a more technicist development approach of 'working on' the community rather than the participatory policy of 'working with' the community. This made VEDCO seem strongly focused on transforming the communities according to its own vision and towards its own goals. This technocratic approach to development was a major obstacle, not only to the attainment of sustainable development goals, but also to the use of participatory methods in implementing VEDCO's programmes within communities.

Lessons learnt:

The technicist development principles on which VEDCO was founded were in direct conflict with the democratic and democratising principles associated with the stipulated goals of participatory development. By pursuing a development ideology bent on 'modernising' communities, VEDCO led itself into an ideological and practical trap that restricted and dented its capacity to focus on broader issues and appropriately respond to them.

With regard to the implementation of the National Environmental Policy, the discussions also reveal that it was erroneous to assume that:

- a) NGOs have the capacity to effectively run community activities, using the appropriate methods and approaches just because they work within communities; this is often not the case

- b) NGOs would effectively implement public policy using their resources for which they had to account by demonstrating results in line with the demands of the donors and
- c) VEDCO would spearhead an emancipatory process through participatory methods at community level, using 'hired labour' and pursuing goals that are strictly tied to donor targets. The truth may be that those who sell their labour without being involved in developing and achieving a shared vision or mission rarely have the moral obligation to get committed to causes beyond the commensurate compensation for their energy.

Implications:

There is a need for NGOs to rethink their development strategies and explore the most appropriate and relevant ones contextually and methodologically. This will mean taking conscious steps to understand the implications of the choice of development path chosen, how such a choice is appropriate within a particular context and whether the methods and approaches associated with it can lead to the desired outcomes.

Secondly, government should not bank on NGOs to implement public policy if they cannot offer financial support to NGO activities. Even when the government funds the activities, NGO agendas should be clarified, the role of government spelt out and strategies, which must include joint monitoring, and evaluation of the implementation process, developed and pursued.

Thirdly it is important also to realise that if NGOs are going to continue playing the central role accorded to them in the implementation of National Environmental Policy, they need to be earnestly supported technically, financially and professionally. NGOs need a significant amount of capacity building, for some of the impressive results by NGOs are not necessarily achieved through skill and expertise, but hard work, facilitation, strict supervision and donor pressure. I think this is the area where NEMA and government can become involved, not only to assess NGO capacity needs, but also to help in addressing those needs.

9.3 DEPENDENCY ON DONOR FUNDING

Many of the tensions characterising VEDCO's internal dynamics discussed in section 9.2 were closely related to the organisation's dependency on donor funding to implement its activities. While this is not to negate the value of international cooperation in the implementation of

sustainable developments as stipulated in Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992), the fact that donors usurped VEDCO's power and capacity to make and pursue its own goals independently puts a question on the relationship. Lack of resources to pursue its goals drove VEDCO into partnerships of skewed power relations (see section 7.2.3.2) with different donors pursuing goals and interests that often contradicted each other and conflicted with those of VEDCO. By entering into these partnerships, VEDCO got drawn into international donor politics, managerialist dynamics, and agendas and deeper into the donor capitalist ideology, pursuing goals of economic growth and modernisation at the expense of other needs and interests (section 6.1.1 and Table 7.2). With this came new goals and agendas and methods of work, foreign to VEDCO's original aspirations in order to accommodate the diverse interests.

While VEDCO in its original capacity as a local NGO, was largely accountable to local stakeholders, including the smallholder farmers, the new alliance with donors meant that the organisation was also accountable not only to the donors, but also the 'donors of the donors' (section 7.2.3.2). In line with this, VEDCO found itself having to accommodate donor's interests, some of which were unrealistic or inappropriate within VEDCO's context. Donors' methods of work involved strict adherence to targets and deadlines for completing activities and reporting for timely accounting. The principle of accounting and reporting to the donors, so that the donors could in turn account to the source of funding raised problems. While it appeared sound in theory, in practice, it resulted in both subtle and not so subtle coercion. VEDCO was literally bullied by threats of fund withdrawal, which pushed management to put pressure on staff who in turn pressurised the farmers, who in the end undertook activities not because they necessarily understood them, but because the NGO wanted them done (section 7.2.3.2). This had negative implications, because smallholder farmers' activities are controlled by natural climate and seasonal changes that do not necessarily correspond with donors' and NGO's targets and deadlines. In addition, strict adherence to targets undermined staff commitment to nurture the spirit of community participation, and the attainment of the goal of sustainable development, as one of the extension workers expressed the dilemma between doing what was professionally right in relation to implementing sustainable agriculture and meeting the targets set by VEDCO and the donors (see Box 8.8).

Dependence of donor funding, in itself did not constitute a problem; it was the related dynamics that made the practice problematic. Donors' methods of work together with their vision of change were technocratic to a great extent. This often distorted VEDCO's methods of work and sense of

direction. Donors seemed to believe that, having provided the money, there was no reason for communities to remain in a poor state. On one occasion for example, while on a field visit with donors, one of them asked “why are only a few farmers changing, why is the whole village not like these few farmers ... what have you not done for them...” (see section 7.2.3.2). This amounted to asking why have you failed to change these people. The attitude not only revealed how poorly informed some donors were, about the working context of their NGO partners, and the actual dynamics of community-based development programmes, but also the technicism of the underlying donors’ approach to development that was preoccupied with the desire to transform people. In the donors’ view, the required transformation was a simple financial and technical knowledge transfer problem, to be fixed by a few thousand dollars, not understanding that change constituted a long process needing more than money, and that in the final analysis, development was on the farmers’ terms not those of the donor or the NGO.

The ideology of the donors usurped VEDCO’S confessed participatory development ideology (see section 9.2.2). Paradoxically, the donors also claimed to stand for participatory implementation and development, but their actions did not reflect it. This affected the programme approach and methodology. Even when extension workers consciously made efforts to employ participatory methods that would yield emancipatory results, the tendency was often not necessarily to focus on what made sense in the eyes of the farmers, but rather to achieve the targets and goals as agreed upon with the donor.

Lessons learnt:

The analysis shows that dependency on donor funds devalues the intentions of the local development organisations/agencies and undermines their capacity to pursue their goals using the most appropriate methods. Secondly, the discussion reveals that it is not just community factors, which make the NGO context complex, but also the funding through the donor link, international policies and ideologies.

Implications:

There is a need for NGOs and donors to realise that their contexts are different, and make deliberate efforts to listen to and understand each other’s situations, educate each other about their different contexts and develop strategies that do not contradict their good intentions.

There is a need for NGOs to realise that the donors need them as much as they need the donors to avoid the tendency of playing “beggar.” (VEDCO once rejected funds from a donor who wanted the organisation to change its entire accounting system in favour of the one preferred by the donor. When VEDCO stood firm and rejected donor funds the latter pleaded that the organisation to take the money and the demands to change the accounting system were dropped).

NGOs need to understand that donors do not necessarily own the money they ‘donate’ which, makes it important for them to get a clear and frank picture of how the money is spent in order for them to account for it. In the same way, the donors need to understand that NGOs also work in a complex context in which they do not control the people they work with, the conditions they operate or the outcomes of their endeavours. This calls for sincere and honest negotiations that must also involve the donors of the donors, and representatives of the communities in which NGOs operate, to develop strategies that will take into consideration the contexts, goals, interests and objectives of the different stakeholders.

9.4 TENSIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE PROGRAMMES

The discussions in sections 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 have pointed out the different tensions and contradictions related to the complexity of the communities, institutional dynamics and dependency on donor funding. The discussions have also shown that the technocratic development ideology of donors has crept into the NGO culture, and influenced its methods of work, and outlook on development. Such tensions seem to have an implication not only for the running, but also the outcomes of VEDCO’s programmes. My analysis of findings on the implementation of programme activities found several contradictory aspects with potential implications for policy implementation and education within developmental contexts. The approach to programme development, vision and mission, goals and objectives and the methodology were a case in point.

9.4.1 Contradictory educational orientations

In chapter two (see section 2.3), I discussed the neoclassical, liberal and socially critical educational orientations as raised by Kemmis *et al* (1983). I also discussed the technical, practical and emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interests (Habermas 1972) that underlie these orientations. Lotz & Ward (2000) have contended that although the different education

orientations developed at different times, they did not actually displace each other; in many cases they continue to operate side-by-side, depending on the diverse ideological inclinations of particular programmes, actors and influences. Whilst VEDCO's programme description (see section 5.4.2) implies a socially critical education orientation to guide community-based environmental education, the situation on the ground was different. The training programme showed an overlap of the three educational orientations, which at times caused contradictions and tensions, both in the implementation process and the outcomes. This was obvious in the shifting views on education depicted in practice (see sections 6.2.1, 6.2.5.1, 8.4.2) at one time seen from a neoclassical perspective as a technical activity (Carr and Kemmis 1986, Higgs 1998) (see section 9.4.1.1) and in other instances as a social activity for individual development and collective emancipation (see section 9.4.1.2).

Overlap of the different educational orientations raises a serious question regarding the applicability of the framework of educational orientations developed by Kemmis *et al*, discussed in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 within a community/adult/development education context. My view is that it is not possible to keep the three educational orientations as exclusive entities. Each orientation represents a type of knowledge that is socially and professionally essential in dealing with particular problems and issues in life. Lotz (1996) acknowledges this when she argues "My experience as a 'facilitator' of emancipatory action research, showed that both the teachers and I needed to acquire technical and practical knowledge and experience, as well as emancipatory knowledge..." In the case of her research, the three types of knowledge were "needed to contribute towards the successful application of action research in participatory materials development..." (Lotz 1996:277). Lotz's view echoes those of Walker (1993). According to Walker, emancipatory knowledge cannot be divorced from technical or practical knowledge because translating political commitment into educational relations requires more than emancipatory rhetoric. During the course of my research, I recognised the need to draw on the three types of knowledge (see knowledge interests in section 2.3.2.1) in order to develop holistic educational responses. Extension workers and I, needed technical knowledge in sustainable agriculture to enable farmers to address their problems, they also needed practical knowledge to interpret the situation of farmers, understand and be able to work with them. In the same vein, they needed emancipatory knowledge to address the institutional and structural obstacles that limited their capacity to think and act as free individuals. It as such becomes detrimental to restrict educational practice to a single educational framework as had happened in VEDCO's original programme, discussed in section 9.4.1.1.

9.4.1.1 Educational practice as a technical activity and a means to specific ends

The analysis in this section is based on the findings generated during the implementation of VEDCO's original programme, which represents the first PAR cycle. The data discussed is mainly drawn from chapters five, six and seven, which I also refer to as the first phase or cycle of the programme. Carr and Kemmis (1986) argued that educational practices informed by a technical knowledge-constitutive interest (Habermas 1972) interpret education as an essentially technical activity, designed to achieve specifiable educational ends. This is a central feature of the neoclassical educational orientation and it underlies technocratic educational planning, transmittal teaching methods, a hierarchical view of the learner and educator and also the instrumentalist vision of change (see section 2.3.3.2). These features were manifested in the programme, despite VEDCO's professed emancipatory intent and the stated national policy goals.

VEDCO'S original programme (see section 5.4.4) depicted the technocratic planning of training activities typical of neoclassical education. The programme was based on the technocratic RDDA (Research, Develop, Disseminate and Adopt) model of programme development and implementation (Popkewitz 1984), despite the use of participatory methods to generate the baseline information on which it was based (see section 5.4.1). This technocratic approach is based on the neo-classical hierarchical view of knowledge and knowing. Here the researcher, the educator, or development worker is considered endowed with the right knowledge and capacities to conceptualise issues on behalf of learners, research participants or communities (Usher *et al* 1997) with whom they work (see section 2.3.3b). This is the assumption manifested in the actions that preceded and also characterised VEDCO's original programme (see section 5.4). Such actions included the baseline study (see section 5.4.1) the selective dissemination of findings (see section 5.4.2), the consultant-led programme development process, flawed selection and training of lead farmers (see section 6.4.1) and the top-down implementation activities discussed in sections 6.4.1, 6.4.2, 6.4.3.

a) Limitations of the technocratic RDDA model of planning

From the socially critical perspective, informed by the intended emancipatory goals of the programme, the RDDA approach has strong limitations that undermine the capacity of programmes to yield sustainable results. The approach makes assumptions that often fail to take account of the complex situations characterising the context (Popkewitz 1984). The

procedures it follows are assumed to be foolproof and appropriate regardless of the circumstances, but this cannot be true given the fact that knowledge is socially located and constructed (see section 2.3.5.2).

Although research plays a leading role in the RDDA approach, it is based on the technicist positivist notion of 'finding out about' people's lives (Usher *et al.* 1997) rather than engaging them in finding meaning in their situation. Research here is viewed in an instrumentalist perspective (Janse van Rensburg 1995) as it focuses on gathering information that aims to serve a predetermined cause. The implication of this is that the findings of such research may not necessarily represent the feelings and aspirations of communities. The baseline study that informed VEDCO's original programme bears out these features of RDDA. For example, the communities said to have provided the information that guided the development of VEDCO's original programme were the same people who refused to implement it, because it did not represent their interests (see section 8.2.1). Such RDDA assumptions are detrimental to emancipatory goals of education and development.

The RDDA approach used by VEDCO did not allow for recursive reflection and review; erroneous conclusions based on the baseline study therefore formed the basis for inappropriate programme planning. An error in any of the different activities constituting the RDDA approach (the research, the development, the dissemination, and the adaptation stage) can negatively affect the final outcome of the programme. In the case of this study, participatory methods were used in an 'extractive' way, to collect baseline data, which resulted in a programme that did effectively respond to the needs of the people. The use of the RDDA approach in the development of VEDCO's programme (see sections 6.4.1.1, 6.5.1, 6.5.2, 6.5.3) alienated both the communities, whose needs it was supposed to respond to and the extension workers who were to implement it in the end (see section 5.4.2).

Lessons learnt:

Reliance on the services of experts without actively involving people in the communities, makes programmes developed using the RDDA approach less likely to represent people's needs and interests. Experts as human beings are socially and ideologically located which raises questions about their ability to see the different dimensions of community needs and problems. This makes it the least appropriate approach to follow when developing programmes with an emancipatory intent. Secondly, because the model is not recursive and reflective,

errors committed when using this approach cannot be corrected until they have caused significant harm.

Implications:

The implication for policy development and implementation is that genuine participatory approaches are necessary in which the relevant stakeholders are given unlimited opportunity to play their appropriate roles at the different stages of programme development and implementation.

There is need for continuous interactive sharing of information and experiences. This implies giving and receiving feedback from the different stakeholders. Related to this, is the need to abandon the concept of 'information dissemination', which perpetuates a one-way 'diffusionist' culture of communication that limits interactive learning. Instead of dissemination, which is a more cosmetic process of information sharing, stakeholders should get sufficient opportunity to engage with research findings, interrogate them further in order to find more meaning and, where possible, reconstruct them by contributing new insights before final decisions are made.

b) Behaviourist objectives and technicist programme content

The use of behavioural programme objectives and indicators (section 5.4.2.1) particularly expressed in quantitative terms resonated with the neoclassical instrumental view of education (see table 7.2) that disregards educational processes and focuses on the outcomes. Because technicist education is geared towards fulfilling predetermined goals, knowledge is treated as a neutral tool to be manipulated by the expert educator (Carr and Kemmis 1986) in order to achieve those goals (section 2.3.3.2). In the programme, this was demonstrated in the emphasis on providing technical facts on sustainable agriculture, together with some facts related to methodology and approach to training (section 6.1) as the purpose was strictly to 'equip' lead-farmers with particular skills in order to enable them to achieve the set objectives. The assumption that the lead farmers could then equip others simply by passing on the technical information, with little regard for the educational processes that the lead-farmers could best employ also demonstrated this.

Socio-economic, political and cultural factors like income, land distribution, the different dimensions of poverty, gender (sections 4.2 and 9.1) and specific individual and group interests that influenced access to and management of key resources were not central factors in the first

phase of the programme, although the baseline study had indicated them. In essence, VEDCO treated the situation simplistically by only viewing community problems from a technical perspective as *lack of knowledge and skills in production, the right technology and markets*. The emerging response was thus technician in nature, seeking to 'fill the gap' through technical means and ignoring the complex nature of the problems. This interpretation of community problems as technical had far reaching methodological and practical implications. The communities were reduced to 'target recipients' in a one-way process of transfer of knowledge and skills. Extension workers were turned into conduits for transferring 'packages' of what VEDCO considered appropriate skills, using transmittal methods and expecting farmers to comply, which was a source of disempowerment (see section.6.4.1.1 b). The same was reflected in the assumptions about how the lead farmers would in turn train other farmers (section 5.4.2.2d).

Hillbur (1998:32) criticises this approach for assuming that such extension packages are "correct", and that the recipients are "a homogenous mass" while attributing farmers' failure to adopt new practices to "resistance to change". This critique directly applies to VEDCO's original programme (section 5.4.2). Farmers' failure to adopt new farming practices taught to them was often viewed as a sign of inefficiency on the part of the extension workers. The extension workers themselves attributed the problem to poor logistical support or said that 'farmers were not cooperative, were resistant, lazy or disinterested'. Rogers (1962) also critiques the "diffusion model" of agricultural development in which technology is extended in a linear progression from the researcher to farmers via extension workers and/or lead farmers in the case of this study. The view of education, training and development as linear processes lies at the core of technocratic training approaches, education and development that devalue the humanity of those considered less capable. According to Pretty (1995:188), "farmers who choose not to adopt are often labelled by extension workers as laggards, with attitudinal barriers". This is often concluded without making serious efforts to establish the reasons for the failure. The same was echoed by Rogers in his classification of farmers into innovators, adopters and laggards (Rogers 1962), categories often used by professionals in the field of agricultural extension to grade farmers, without establishing the factors that influence such farmers' responses. The problem with basing learning on behavioural objectives, especially in a community context is that it is easy for implementers to lose sight of the contextual factors surrounding the programme and focus only on the activities that lead to the stated outcomes. What must be noted is that the achievement of such outcomes is largely influenced by the

context. This might imply that even with all efforts focussed on the ultimate goal, with contextual factors unattended to, the outcomes might remain a mirage that might never be achieved in the project's lifetime. Indeed this happened in the initial phase of VEDCO's programme when the issue was to train farmers, make them adopt new methods and proclaim success within a short period (see sections 5.4.2, 6.3, 8.2.1)

Lessons learnt:

The above analysis shows that viewing community problems as technical problems leads to simplistic responses that largely ignore other dimensions of community problems and leads to simplistic solutions and strategies that fail to yield concrete results. Secondly, pursuing behavioural objectives turns learners into experimental objects to be subjected to specific conditions and observed as they metamorphose into the educators' desired product.

Implications:

There is a need for policy makers, programme developers and implementers to engage in deeper analysis of community problems so as to be able to understand the wider picture and implication in order to develop programmes that will reflect the multiple dimensions of the problems and deal with them holistically.

Learning outcomes are broader than those narrowly defined by behavioural objectives, which implies the need to broaden the scope and criteria for measuring outcomes to include such factors as the sustainability of outcomes, the extent to which learning is integrated into the learners' style of work, creating an inner self-motivating drive that leads to lifelong learning and finally take into consideration the learner's ability to act proactively and responsively to challenges in life.

c) Technician training structures and strategies

The structure of the training exhibited the neoclassical notion of a separation between theory and practice (Higgs, 1998). The initial training workshops were structured into two distinct parts, one consisting of theory and the other of practice in the form of demonstrations. The theory was always taught at the beginning of the training workshops in school-like educational settings, obviously based on a neoclassical assumption that good learning takes place when theory precedes practice to make it easier for learners to translate learning into action (Kemmis and Carr 1986, Higgs 1998). Learners were made to demonstrate on plots, anticipating that

demonstration would equip them with the necessary experience and capacity to implement what they had learnt on their farms. While work on the demonstrations was practical, the method employed was the transmittal 'showing and telling' the farmers what to do, without engaging them in such a way as to become critical and co-constructive co-participants (Lotz and Ward 2000). Demonstration as a training method/approach does not nurture a participatory spirit and practical as it appears, it remains an autocratic didactic method. The learner can go through the process without getting empowered to become an independent actor, as the process involves following what the expert does. In the absence of the expert to follow, the learner is rendered powerless.

At the same time, demonstration as a method and the accompanying technician assumptions caused extension workers to believe that they had to become experts, able to provide all answers to all questions (see Box 8.9 EXT III). As I argued in chapter two (see section 2.3.3.2), this is one of the ways in which neoclassical educational practices give a false sense of power to educators, while at the same time disempowering learners. This orientation elevates educators as the sole possessors of knowledge and undermines the critical education goal of collective 'active-meaning-making' as the flow of learning becomes largely a one-way process. This has key implications: it perpetuates a false confidence among facilitators that prevents them from learning from learners, while at the same time it undermines the learners' confidence (Freire 1970). Technician training structures and strategies thus create dependent learners. In the case of this study, many farmers who implemented during the first phase of the programme did so because of follow-ups by extension workers. Other farmers showed a high degree of dependency, always complaining whenever extension workers did not follow them up saying "mwatusuula" (*meaning: you abandoned us*). This might sound a warning that technician methods like demonstration should only be used briefly as a technique to illustrate a point, but not as the main method or approach in an educational endeavour.

Training local people as lead-farmers and role models to facilitate in the community on a more sustainable basis (see section 5.4.2.2d), as I have argued, assumes that teaching involves no more than the passing on technical information/demonstration of techniques. Although the approach was intended to nurture the spirit of participation in programme activities, the selection of lead farmers using non-participatory methods (see section 6.4.1) and the belief in 'cascading learning' from lead farmers 'down' to the community dented it. To believe in cascading knowledge is to ignore the important role of the educational process. If the

importance of educational processes were not ignored, project staff would not have assumed that good farmers would also be good educators (see section 5.4.2.2[2]). The assumption was a mistake because those lead farmers who undertook training, often did so in a technician, demonstrative manner³⁶ and trained farmers in that way.

The above findings represent some of the key contradictions characterising VEDCO's training programme. The neo-classical orientation practically reigned in a programme that was in principle motivated by liberal and socially critical intent. The neo-classical view of education as a technical process contradicts the basic tenets of both liberal and socially critical education, which view the process as a social activity and employ educational methods that emphasise people's participation (Carr & Kemmis 1986). The fact that the programme was in theory motivated by an emancipatory intent implied that the methods and approaches employed reflected that goal, although the opposite occurred in practise. The use of transmittal training methods (see section 6.2.1) in service of a socially critical emancipatory intent instead, exposed the contradictions underlying the programme and compels one to wonder as to how conscious the emancipatory intent of the programme was of or whether staff had already lost sight of it.

The above contradiction in methodology and approach can be associated with the traditional approach to schooling in Uganda. Equally important are the limitations linked to the socially critical and liberal education orientations. The two factors represent deeper ideological, socio-economic, cultural and historical tensions, at the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, Uganda has been part of the international political economy for more than a century, the longer part of which was under direct colonial tutelage and almost half a century under neo-colonial dependent regimes. These regimes maintained the colonial autocratic ideological, political and socio-economic structures, including the neo-classical educational orientation. At the micro level, the postcolonial conflicts and wars that have been both politically and economically motivated have led to successive back and forth shifts in national goals and intentions, including education with regard to and development. There were no deliberate efforts to de-

³⁶ Most of the NGO members of staff were amateurs in the area of participatory facilitation, being fresh from school and more comfortable with the traditional lecture mode of teaching. The more experienced fieldworkers were confident with their subject matter, but not with the methodology. Hence, when they trained lead farmers to train fellow farmers in the community, they gave them technical knowledge in Sustainable agriculture, but not in community training. The donor pressures and the time limitations played a major role in discouraging even those with the capacity to train in a participatory manner from doing so.

colonise the state structures, institutions and associated mindsets. The successive postcolonial governments, for example, maintained the same educational values and approaches. The last fifteen years of the twentieth century have however, seen a deliberate intention by the NRM government to change the status quo as expressed in the policy statements with emancipatory intentions (GOU 1995, MNR 1995, NEMA 1998a). The political, social and ideological inconsistencies of the past have manifested themselves in the very contradictions characterising the educational disposition. This echoes the socially critical contention that education is a product and a reflection of the socio-economic and ideological context of the society in question (Carr and Kemmis 1986, Giroux 1983, Youngman 1986).

Lessons learnt:

The first lesson we learn from the foregoing discussion is that although participatory educational methods are potentially emancipatory, they can be used in a technicist-disempowering manner, to meet the educators' interests, depending on either the ideology of the educator or his/her capacity to make effective use of the methods. In the case of this study, this is evident in the shifts in the application of participatory methods in the different phases of the programme (see sections 6.3.1, 8.4.1, 8.5, 9.4.1.2).

The findings have also reiterated the fact that technocratic training structures, methods and strategies encourage dependency among learners. It has also been revealed that the technicist belief that learning can be cascaded from lead farmers into the community is flawed as it ignores the contextual factors in which learning takes place.

Implications:

The implication of the first lesson is that in order to use participatory methods in an emancipatory way, a person needs to have a clear emancipatory intent and if not, make deliberate efforts to nurture one. The question is how one develops the intent. My view is that one can begin by first examining one's motivation and express the goals of action, e.g. Why should one be interested in using participatory methods. Is it necessary or not? Delineate possible methods and techniques and check personal capacity to use them. Then eliminate obvious causes of abuse like time and financial limitations, consider strategies to deal with these in advance to avoid having to respond to crises. This is not to say that obstacles can be pre-empted, but rather those expected could be avoided.

9.4.1.2 Education as a social emancipatory process

In section 9.4.1.1, I have analysed the education processes in the first PAR cycle. The analysis in this section is based on findings of the second and last PAR cycle presented in chapter eight. As stated in section 8.4.1, the change from the technician approach discussed in section 9.4.1.1 to a participatory one, constituted a revolution in VEDCO's method of work, orientation and working culture of the extension workers. In turn, the response of the farmers also changed for the better. Utilisation of learners' interests, knowledge and experiences, engagement of participants in learning for immediate action, dialogue, collective critical investigation of situations and action planning, were the central pillars of the second PAR cycle. We ('facilitators', including extension workers and I) drew on the principles and assumptions of the socially critical orientation to education in this endeavour (see sections 2.3.5).

Emancipatory education is founded on the belief in the need for education to play a role in creating a just and democratic society (Giroux 1983). This implies that education becomes a process that leads to a genuine exercise of power by the majority (Bertrand 1995) in deciding on educational matters. Based on this principle, we took deliberate steps to break away from the technician approach to education that characterised the first PAR cycle. Findings showed that it was possible to actively involve farmers not only in decision-making, but also in implementing those decisions without pressure from the facilitators, when participatory methods were appropriately used (see sections 8.3, 8.6.1.2 and table 8.3). Through the use of PRA methods, for example, the falsehoods about community interests created by the RDDA approach that informed VEDCO's original programme (see section 5.4) were uncovered (see sections 8.2.1.1, 8.2.1.2, 8.2.1.3 and 8.2.1.4). A new implementation strategy was developed which grouped farmers according to their interests, and specific training was organised around the interests. In addition, a new concept of food security was also developed, the range of crops regarded as essential for income generation and food security was widened to include crops preferred by individual farmers and groups, rather than those that had been imposed upon them in the original programme. Farmers also began to play a central role in shaping the character and direction of the programme (see sections 8.3, 8.3.1 and 8.3.2). The results of the changes were evident not only in farmers' positive responses to programme activities and their commitment to implement but also in their self-confidence and attitudes towards self-reliance (see sections 8.5, 8.6.1.2, and Boxes 8.4, 8.5). As a result of the changes, many farmers felt able to challenge the NGO and the extension workers whenever they failed to meet their obligations (see Box 8.4, EXT II and EXTIII).

Analysis of farmers' views on the use of participatory training methods (see section 8.4.2, Box 8.2) showed the following as prerequisites for good training and learning: assessment of learners' prior knowledge before introducing new learning (see Box 8.2, 15k-2); use of local language and learning materials (Box 8.2, 7k-3); practical involvement of the learners in challenging experiences allowing them to experiment and discover useful information and skills for themselves (see Box 8.2, 21k-2 and section 8.4.2, 18k-2); exposure visits to successful farmers and farming projects with conditions with which a farmer can identify (case 15k-2); being focussed; facilitators willingness to listen, allowing learners to ask questions, focusing on issues of direct relevance to learners (33k-3); and follow-up support for learners. Whilst none of the above views is actually new within the educational field (see e.g. Knowles, 1980), the fact that farmers raised them denotes a rediscovery and confirmation of existing theory in learning and educational methodology, this time in a rural community context.

Extension workers also experienced major personal and professional transformations, which were important landmarks in their careers as educators within community contexts (see Boxes 8.3, and 8.9). Their approach to training changed from the technician top-down one discussed in section 9.4.1.2 to one of sharing and negotiation, in which learners and facilitators became co-learners and co-constructors of knowledge. This was in line with the basic tenets of critical pedagogy (Freire 1970, Giroux 1983, Mayo 1999) and the socially critical orientation to education (see section 2.3.5.2). The new awareness of the fact that, as facilitators, extension workers were not supposed to provide the answers to all the questions but to work with farmers to find the answers collectively, showed that they had developed the ability not only to accept challenges and criticisms from colleagues and farmers, but also to reflect on their own abilities and actions and respond accordingly (see Box 8.9).

Results also demonstrated a positive change in the relationship between extension workers and VEDCO management with the decision-making processes becoming increasingly participatory and the views of extension workers more respected (see Box 8.3). To a large extent, one could say that extension workers attained some deeper level of empowerment, which was likely to influence their careers as community-based educators. Farmers also acknowledged the improvement in the way extension workers conducted the training (see Box 8.2) in contrast to what happened in the first cycle.

The positive changes notwithstanding, there were still several opposing factors that made the implementation of programme activities difficult for many farmers. While it was essential to make use of learners' knowledge and experiences, in some instances farmers either lacked the necessary knowledge and experiences, or the facilitators did not have the time or capacity to effectively guide the dialogue in a way that would enable farmers to make useful contributions to the discussions as one of the cases shows:

The training process was good, but we made one mistake. Because they used to ask us what we wanted to learn, we only remembered some things and forgot others. We, for example asked them to teach us about vegetable farming, but did not ask them to teach us enough about pest control and management. We instead asked for that training after we saw our vegetables being attacked (18-k2).

This is a warning to socially critical educators on the way in which they guide learning processes within communities. While this might have been an oversight on the part of farmers who did not raise all the important issues and the trainers who failed to apply their professional knowledge and experience, it is also true that often people do not have all the information and knowledge necessary to plan appropriate responses to their problems, rendering it erroneous to assume, as is normally the case in critical pedagogy, that learners know what they need to learn (Freire 1970, Giroux 1983). Findings also revealed there were still cases where the more vocal and influential members of the community marginalized the poor, the quiet and, at times, women. One extension worker made an important observation in this respect:

I have also observed that when we meet in groups, some of the individuals are suppressed because we tend to emphasise issues that are applicable to the general group leaving out some of the more personal ones applying to individuals. Often farmers come out with real issues, but you realise the issue is personal and the group tries to silence such people saying they are being irrelevant. Then I realise that good as the approach looks, it leaves out the specific interests, strengths and weaknesses of individuals (EXT III, also see Box 8.3).

This is apparently a key problem in facilitation, which in an attempt to overcome top-down training, errs on the other extreme. It remains a challenge to critical educators to manage participatory learning processes, without perpetuating inappropriate and unproductive social differentiations. It is imperative to note, however, that the above concern by the extension worker represents professional growth on his part of extension workers, resulting from the

reflective processes introduced through the study. He has seen the limitations of the superficial way in which participatory methods are often applied.

In the same light, despite the impressive outcomes of the participatory process, there were still some clear indicators of the technician spirit discussed earlier on. For example, it is mentioned in section 8.3.2 that, although farmers actively participated in developing community targets, such targets were often over-ruled by donors' pressure and NGO preference. Plans of action made by the community were also violated without explanation (see Box 8.4). Such actions force one to question the level of commitment to participation within the organisation and how far it can be relied on for policy implementation.

What must also be acknowledged here is that, the positive results of the second PAR cycle took place alongside major organisational, policy and economic limitations. The poverty situation among farmers was still the same; land was still scarce for many farmers, problematic gender relations continued unabated, and farmers' personal weaknesses like petty selfishness continued to exist. For example, due to lack of the necessary resources a number of farmers were unable to implement what they had learnt, despite the sound knowledge they had acquired and exhibited when interviewed, (see section 8.7.1). As for extension workers, donor and organisational pressure to meet targets still reigned, although some of the administrative and managerial hiccups were declining (see Box 8.9, EXT III).

Lessons learnt:

The experiences discussed above provide an important lesson regarding training as a major policy implementation strategy. It is illustrated that good training on its own is not enough to enable people to effectively implement policies and programmes because, more often than not, lack of knowledge and skills are just some of the limitations to programme implementation.

Secondly, it has been demonstrated that while learners are knowledgeable about many aspects of their lives and can use such knowledge and experience to strengthen the learning programmes, it is also true that sometimes learners may not have all the knowledge they need. Hence educators over-reliance learners experiences might lead to failures that will cast doubt on the socially critical and liberal educational assumption about learner's experiences and knowledge as a basis for meaningful learning (see sections 2.3.4.2, 2.3.5.2). In the same vein,

failure by the educators to contribute their own knowledge and experience to boost learners' experiences can undermine our own commitment to effective training.

Implications:

While training is an essential strategy for implementing policies in community contexts, it should be seen just as one of the strategies but not “the strategy”. As I argued earlier in relation to the complexities of community and gender issues, even here there is a need to explore the context, identify the contextual factors and other dimensions of the problems in question, in order to select the most appropriate ways of addressing them.

Facilitators should be aware that learners might at times have limited knowledge and experience that may call for the experience and expert knowledge of the facilitator. This implies that facilitators need to be sufficiently equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills to guide, supplement and, at times, inform learners or even correct learners' misinformation and gaps in knowledge. Thirdly, facilitators need to be aware of the importance of their own empowerment and active involvement in the processes of spearheading the empowerment process of the learners. By entirely leaving the process to the learners, the facilitator will be abdicating his/her responsibility and rendering himself irrelevant when he is most needed to keep the process on course and avoid unhelpful scenarios like the ones quoted from 18k-2 and EXT III above.

9.4.2 Contradictions within the socially critical orientation

This section aims to analyse the contradictions and tensions associated with a socially critical orientation to education, development and change that emerged during the study. At the time I designed this study, and throughout the larger part of its execution, I believed that it was only a socially critical or closely related education orientation that could effectively guide the implementation of Uganda's environmental policy at community level. Working as a full time member of VEDCO's project implementation team and on a research project committed to those assumptions, gave me the opportunity to experience the challenges associated with the application of socially critical ideals in a community context. This, together with my interaction with more literature outside and beyond the critical tradition, challenged my views on socially critical education and some of the assumptions and claims associated with it.

Several authors share my concern about some of the assumptions and claims of critical pedagogy. Lotz (1996:267), for instance, observed, “reified positions on critical theory and

change through the application of assumptions of critical theory have increasingly come under scrutiny". Lather (1991a) criticizes critical theories for adopting technicist tendencies, to achieve instrumentalist 'emancipatory' goals and objectives, which she summarises as "falling prey to the irony of domination and repression inherent in efforts to free one another" (Lather 1991a: 59).

9.4.2.1 Assumption on empowerment

Critical theories emphasise the relationship between education, empowerment and emancipation. I found the last two concepts particularly problematic, firstly, because of the deceptively simple way in which they are used in critical literature, and secondly, because of the variety of assumptions that accompany them. According to Usher *et al* (1997:187):

Empowerment does not mean individual self-assertion, upward social mobility or increased disposable income or even a psychological experience of feeling self realised ... it means ... an understanding of the causes of powerlessness, recognising systematically oppressive forces and acting individually and collectively to change the conditions of life.

I found the above idea embraced the views of many critical scholars on empowerment. Nevertheless, my interaction with local farmers in the study area makes me agree and disagree with it. Whilst I agree that becoming critically aware of the causes of powerlessness, recognising the oppressors and acting to transform the oppressive conditions constitutes a major component of empowerment, I also find this view riddled with discomfiting assumptions that are not consistent with realities on the ground.

At one level, I find the above conceptualisation of empowerment exclusive in one important way. The view emphasises the end result and ignores the contextual dynamics, which underlie the ideal. Using PRA/PLA methods in different communities to map out the existing socio-economic and environmental situation, communities were able to collectively identify, critically grade and prioritise the nature of obstacles and challenges impeding their capacity to control their destinies (see tables 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13). Interestingly, most of the problems were related to people's immediate survival needs. Even when we conducted a step-by-step analysis of the causes using problem trees (appendix 4.3) and probing with the 'but why' question, (see Table 4.5), the answers were still tilted in the same direction. From a critical perspective, one could conclude that farmers were probably not empowered enough and therefore unable to analyse 'the deeper' causes of their problems and that is why they stopped at the immediate causes. My contention is that to argue that because people have not talked

about what critical theory calls the 'deeper causes' of problems, then they are not empowered enough, amounts to an imposition of our own view of reality on people. I see this as a drawback of critical theory, because while it is a principle of critical theory to analyse the material conditions of life in order to discover falsehoods (see section 2.3.5.2) and so become empowered, some underlying assumptions of the tradition like what constitutes 'true empowerment procedures' and the desired outcomes are uncritically adhered to.

The findings seemed to suggest that empowerment may not be as rigid a process as presented in critical theory. These results implied that empowerment is a process, the starting point of which depends on the context of the society in question. For it is argued under the same critical theory that knowledge of the world is always an interpretation of reality from a particular viewpoint (McKay & Romm 1992), a point explored further by Krippner and Winkler (1995), both post-modern analysts, who argue that 'truth' is a matter of 'perspective'. Hence, although my initial motivation and expectation was to study issues related to community politics and power-related structural injustices associated with resource use and management at different levels, I was convinced that in order for those issues to be understood, more obvious problems of poverty and food security had to be addressed first, secondary as they might have appeared from our own perspective. For as Angelson (1997:137) argued, and I was also convinced "Environmental thinking starts after breakfast, and with none, or insufficient meals, there will be little environmental thinking". Naturally, from the socially critical stance that I had chosen, the change raised key questions and debates, for I had always believed that such a move would lead to an unfortunate situation where, like many other uninformed development workers, we would end up, as Ellsworth put it, treating the symptoms but leaving "the disease unnamed and untouched" (Ellsworth 1989:297), but the fact that we were consciously responding to issues of utmost priority to the community convinced us to go ahead, fully committed to a participatory approach to community challenges and obstacles.

The initial outcomes of our PRA engagement demonstrated more individual self-assertion, upward social mobility, increased incomes and a general sense of realised self-confidence (see Boxes 8.4, 8.6, 8.7) for both farmers and extension workers. Whilst this does not constitute empowerment as is often described in critical literature (Usher 1997, Huckle and Sterling 1996), in our case, it represented a significant push towards individual transformation. To the farmers, the visible oppressor, which was food insecurity and poverty, was beginning to retreat

and they were taking more informed decisions on how to manage the resources at their disposal.

Lessons learnt:

From this evidence, we learn that empowerment is a process that starts at the current status of people's lives and progresses according to the material conditions of the people in question. Within this process, the milestones in the form of the various sustainable achievements people attain in the struggle should mark the levels of empowerment, but not any strict criteria established elsewhere. Secondly, contrary to the common socially critical assertions on empowerment mentioned above, in the light of this study, includes individual self-assertion; upward mobility and increased disposable income, the psychological experience of feeling self-realised and, in addition to understanding the causes of powerlessness, recognising systematically oppressive forces and act individually and collectively to change conditions because in the absence of the former factors, the latter can be rendered totally impracticable.

Another lesson on empowerment can be drawn from the two women (see section 9.1.2) who were divorced when they began making independent decisions. The cases highlight the complex nature of the empowerment process. The cases show that it is necessary for one to be empowered at one level in order to recognise the other forms of disempowerment. The event makes us to realise that the problem in the community is not only lack of economic power, but also lack of political power at household level in order to overcome the power of patriarchy.

Implications:

It is important for the people concerned to engage in a conscious effort to develop their individual and collective capacities through a continuous process of engaging with the emerging challenges in life and in the process nurture the capacity not only to respond to problems, but also become proactive with time.

The implication of the second lesson is that, as we work towards community empowerment, it is necessary to look at the process horizontally and vertically. The struggle to achieve the practical needs (basic human needs) in life is a horizontal one, success in which, places the individual or community at a level where they can begin to pursue the more strategic goals in life, which I have decided to call the vertical dimension of the empowerment process,

which addresses the more critical issues of politics and the related structural dynamics. My contention is that the two are integral components of the same process of empowerment and without one; the other cannot be completed because both dimensions are equally important.

9.4.2.2 Assumptions on power, powerlessness, oppression and emancipation

At another level, critical theories make sweeping assumptions on power and powerlessness, oppressor and oppressed which divide society into two diametrically opposed sections; the powerful oppressors and the powerless oppressed (Popkewitz and Brennan 1998). I found this inconsistent with the existing reality in the society. Powerlessness did not always arise as a universal phenomenon for any specific group of people. Even where it emerged, as in the case of some women who were denied access to family land (see section 4.2.3), we could not generalise, since there were many examples of other women fully supported by their husbands and involved in meaningful decision-making in the households (see section 8.7.2). It was interesting to see supposedly powerless women using their powers as custodians of household food security to prevent their husbands to divert land meant for food production to commercial farming (see section 6.4.2). I found it difficult to categorise any group or individuals as entirely oppressed, powerless or powerful. Poor as most of the people were, this did not imply that they were necessarily oppressed or powerless, e.g. they exhibited the power to reject or undermine the NGO's efforts; similarly the NGO was both powerful and powerless; the donor agencies were also at times 'powerless' as well.

Different individuals and groups expressed their power in various ways. The power of the villagers lay in their capacity to decide upon their actions independently and follow their own ideas rather than VEDCO's agendas, even when they appeared weak and vulnerable. This was demonstrated during all phases of the programme. In the first phase, they quietly refused to apply VEDCO's training because it was imposed and implemented at the wrong time, trying to divert them from their programmes, which to them, would have spelt disaster (see section 6.4.1.1). This forced VEDCO to respond to people's concerns in the second phase of the programme (chapter 8).

The way in which the villagers expressed their power often threatened VEDCO, an apparently strong NGO, its machinery and its donor friends. For instance, by refusing to respond to VEDCO's training that did not correspond with their personal interests, VEDCO was forced to rethink its approach and strategy (see sections 7.2.2, 8.2.1.4 and 8.3). VEDCO itself and the

donors were powerless in the face of farmers who refused to implement the programme as expected. Neither VEDCO nor the donors were able to keep their records and accountabilities straight without the co-operation of the farmers. Power was thus continuously changing hands. This demonstrates the fluidity of power and devalues the practice of branding people powerless, for anybody can be powerless at any given time. In the same way, identifying the oppressors was not always easy as shifts in power location often reflected shifts in advantages and disadvantages and therefore levels of vulnerability to oppression. In this way, there were two obvious areas of disempowerment on the part of the farmers, namely: a) their lack of knowledge of how much power they had over the future of VEDCO and donors, or else they would have used it to negotiate better deals for themselves; and b) knowledge about marketing dynamics, especially at the international level which rendered them helpless in the face of exploitative middlemen. The above discussions find support in the writing of Foucault (1980), who viewed power as dynamic, dispersed, circulating, heteromorphous and always linked to knowledge.

Another finding that seemed to challenge the generalised notion of empowerment was related to the uniqueness of the communities VEDCO worked with (see sections 8.8.1, 8.8.2, 9.1 and 9.5.3). While it is anticipated in critical theory that collective action, is necessary to deal with collective problems, in the case of my study, I realised right from the beginning that collective action was not a favoured method of work among members of the community (see section 8.8.2). Thus, expecting people to respond to problems collectively (Freire 1970 and Giroux 1983) was an imposition of our own view of how communities should deal with their problems and contrary to the expectations of critical emancipatory learning and independent 'action-taking' arising from one's genuine understanding of the situation. Hence, is prescribing the expected behaviour or semblance of an empowered community in itself not a manifestation of subtle technocratic assumptions, characteristic of the neoclassical orientation creeping into critical pedagogy, thus defeating the professed emancipatory goals of the participatory action research and development project.

Lessons learnt:

The above discussion has demonstrated that power is not a possession or speciality of certain individuals or groups of people, which they can control and are free to dispense it as and when they want. Power is dynamic; it shifts with time and the particular circumstances of people at a given time. The fluidity of power is part of the dynamic that ensure the survival of human

society as it underscores the need for interdependence and symbiotic living. Secondly, society is not polarised into two diametrically opposed groups of oppressors and oppressed. The ability to oppress and be oppressed migrates with the shift in the location of power. In addition, because there are several forms of power and locations of power, even the fields of oppression can be equal in number many, hence, the different dimensions of oppression based on aspects like gender, class, age religion, ethnicity and race.

Implications:

Assuming that some people have power and others do not is a serious source of disempowerment for all people. In this case, the power of the so-called powerless is not utilised, while at the same time the powerlessness of the so-called powerful is not addressed, yet the two are important in addressing fundamental causes of disempowerment.

Because there were no permanent groups of oppressors and oppressed in the case of this study, the concept of the polarisation of society into oppressors and oppressed leaves certain forms of oppression unidentified and therefore untouched e.g. oppression on the basis of religion, age, culture and other interpersonal dynamics, none of which may have anything to do with the usual categorisations based on socio-economic class and political orientation.

9.4.2.3 The socially critical assumption of levelling power gradients

Critical theory aims to reduce the power gradients between those with power and authority to dominate others and those considered powerless. This is when people gain the capacity to organise themselves collectively and without authoritarian control (Janse van Rensburg & Lotz 2000). I found this assumption to be based on the defective premise of a polarised society of powerless and powerful classes of people. In situations with fluid power relations, like the one described in section 9.4.2.2, a universal levelling of the power gradients is not easy to achieve due to the subtle nature of power structures and its many locations and manifestations.

At another level, the assumption that society is polarised does not take into consideration other scenarios like that of VEDCO, which is not necessarily on any particular side of the main divide, but rather a 'friend' to the so-called powerless. The truth is that even this kind of interaction involves power relations. Even in this case, I found the harmonisation of power relations a complicated matter because of the different positions occupied by the different people in terms of their socio-economic and other privileges. These positions would not only affect the

interrelations between them, but also their understanding of each other's situation. Ellsworth (1989) brings out this paradox in her own situation where, as a person from a privileged section of American society, she was constrained to understand the situation of her racially harassed students. Ellsworth's observation resonates with what happened in this study. VEDCO's understanding and analysis of the situation of the villagers was constrained by their different locations as follows: educated, employed, smartly dressed, compared to the villagers, riding motorbikes and able to advise farmers on matters that appeared complex to them. The extension workers' understanding of poverty could not be the same as that of the poor farmers. This revealed itself in some of the assumptions we made about farmers, despite the participatory engagement. The assumption that all farmers could afford to get the necessary requirements for sustainable agricultural practices was a case in point. The question that arises here is, whether the power gradients ever be effectively levelled, given the multiple locations of individuals and groups as a result of the fluidity of power in society as discussed earlier; I see this as an idealistic contention of critical theory that is very difficult to achieve in its entirety. The fact that it starts from the assumption that one group of people is empowered and the other is not means that it is flawed even before the process begins. My view is that, instead of aiming to level power gradients from a flawed technicist view of empowerment, as if it is a one-way transfer of power, by the empowered to the disempowered, one should engage in a process of mutual empowerment from all angles through increased knowledge of and about each other, in order to appreciate one another's situation and be able to work towards each others goals. My view should not be misconstrued to mean that no empowerment could ever take place. In this study, certain levels of transformation that could be seen as empowerment were attained (sections 8.9, 9.4.1.2, Boxes 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, and 8.9) but the degree and sustainability of the observed changes remained open to question.

9.5 PARTICIPATION AND THE USE OF THE PARTICIPATORY METHODS

The use of participatory methods was a central factor due to the transformative intent of the study. Participation and participatory methods are preferred where social transformation and emancipation constitute the key goal of learning. Despite this, there are differences in the interpretation of participation, and the assumptions people associate with it, which affect their application. Authors such as McCall (1991), Oakley and Marsden (1984), Pretty (1995), and Rahnema (1992), have argued that participatory methods can be viewed in instrumental terms as tools to achieve pre-determined goals or from a democratic perspective where they are used to create conditions for emancipation (see section 2.1.2.1). If the impression given by the

above description is that of participation, divided along clear lines, it is not true. In the case of this study, there were times when participatory methods were used in an instrumentalist manner to achieve VEDCO's predetermined goals (see sections 5.4.2, 6.3.6.1, 9.4.1.1a,b and c) and also where they were used with some emancipatory intent to empower farmers and VEDCO staff (see sections 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 and 9.4.1.2).

9.5.1 Use of participatory methods during the programme

Judging by what happened in the process, VEDCO's original programme (see sections 5.4, 5.4.2, 6.3.1 and 6.3.6.1) seems to have been intended to use participatory methods technocratically as part of the 'technical toolbox' to fix the problems in the community. The organisation's initial priority was to attain food security through sustainable agriculture. The emphasis was on meeting the set targets in terms of numbers of farmers trained, demonstration gardens established and farmers converted to the new ways of farming (see Table 7.2). This was contradictory in that VEDCO was acting like a contractor hired to do a job by meeting the terms of reference set by the donors and not by working in a collaborative endeavour with the communities as partners (see assessment in tables 7.2, 7.3). It was a contradiction in as far as the broad programme agenda was emancipatory, and it was not contradictory in as far as it was a product of a technocratic process and it was serving similar interests. Communities were reduced to mere sites for implementation of a programme that largely belonged to VEDCO, while, in theory the programme was a partnership between VEDCO and the community. Participation by the community was therefore not aimed at encouraging the community to undergo a thorough process of transformation, but rather to meet predetermined goals, which in the words of Oakley and Marsden (1984) meant 'righting the little wrongs' within the previous development efforts.

While, in theory VEDCO and the villagers were partners, in reality they were not treated as equals. As I mention this, I am under no illusion that the opposite should have happened given the skewed power relations (sections 7.2.4.1, 7.2.3.2 and 7.3), but the fact that it happened in a programme that in theory aimed to achieve emancipatory goals makes it contradictory. There were several possible explanations for such contradictions in addition to those discussed in sections: 9.2.1, 9.2.2 and 9.3.

- a) There was the question of how equal, partners could be when one is poor and less advantaged than the other, especially when the agenda was largely imposed?
- b) The desires, expectations and orientations of the partners were contradictory. While VEDCO was driven by the desire to meet donor obligations (section 9.3) among others

- and justify the continuation of funding (section 7.2.3.2), the farmers also harboured many selfish interests, which hampered success. Many farmers attended programmes expecting free handouts without serious commitment to the cause (section 8.8.1 and section 8.8.2);
- c) The capacity of VEDCO staff to guide a participatory process while under pressure to achieve targets using participatory methods seemed to wane with the mounting pressure from the donors and the NGO (section 7.2.3.2); and
 - d) Whether long term empowerment was actually a key priority became a questionable matter, for as I realised with time, project-based development cannot lead to long-lasting outcomes, as the projects themselves are temporary, and their implementation a race against time. Secondly, extension workers had failed to raise participatory implementation of the programme as a major objective of the programme during the internal review workshop (see section 6.4.1.1a).

This situation challenges socially critical assumptions about participatory processes. For example, harmonising interests is elusive, particularly in a situation where there is little mutual respect between the actors; not only due to the different power positions, but also to the way the actors perceive each other (see sections 7.2.3.1, 7.2.3.2). As discussed in section 9.4.1.2 when deliberate efforts were made and appropriate steps taken to make effective use of participatory methods, there was remarkable progress (see sections 8.4.1 and 8.6, also see 9.4.1.1c lessons and implications).

The question not yet answered or even asked is whether training and development practitioners actually understand the theoretical and practical implications of different educational methods when they are choosing them. My experience of the way in which extension workers at VEDCO selected, used and talked about methods showed that they did not understand the theory and philosophy behind using various training methods and approaches. That is probably why it was easy for different training methods to be used inappropriately (see sections 6.3.1, 9.4.1.1) and also more effectively when deliberate efforts were made to learn to apply them (see sections, 8.4.1, 9.4.1.2). Using participatory methods in a technocratic way did not seem to constitute a mistake in the eyes of the extension workers. To them, the educational methods and their selection for use were unimportant matters; methods seemed to mean merely tools, to be picked up freely and used, and if the wrong outcomes emerged, the blame went to the learners as “uncooperative or laggards” (see section

9.4.1.1a,b, c). The issues discussed above seem to point some important lessons and implications for educators.

Lessons learnt:

While genuine intent to use participatory methods to achieve emancipatory ideals, the power relations between the poor and the rich as partners, makes it difficult for the two to act as equals (see lessons and implications on sections 9.2.1, 9.2.2, 9.4.1.1a, 9.4.1.1c, 9.4.1.2).

Secondly, the use of projects as development strategies contradicts the meaning of development as a long-term holistic process as projects are short term, narrowly focused and often tied to short-term goals considered achievable and easy from the point of view of showing results within the short available period.

Thirdly, failure to harmonise the interests, goals and needs of the different partners becomes a source of contradictory relations which prevent honest and frank engagement in the participatory processes, which result in frustrating emancipatory endeavours.

Lastly, educators' lack of clarity about the theoretical aspects surrounding methods and their practical implications in the learning situation causes them to take decisions that contradict their declared objectives. In the case of this study, I could see that such a lack of theoretical clarity, coupled with pressure from management and donors to meet targets, made it possible for VEDCO staff even to lose sight of the goals of the programme.

Implications:

While I recognise the fact that development projects play an essential role in responding to some of the immediate problems in communities, it is imperative that development planners and practitioners begin to view and use development projects as short-term solutions that can only lead to long-lasting solutions, if they are developed in such a way as to lead to other development projects or broader development programmes integrated into society's social, economic, cultural and political contexts.

Educators of educators need to emphasise the relationship between the learning goals, the learning methods used and the theoretical implications of that relationship. This will help trained educators to develop the capacity to make an informed selection of the appropriate educational

methods and approaches. In this way the learning outcomes will not contradict the goals and objectives laid down to guide the process.

9.5.2 Flawed assumptions about participation and participatory methods

VEDCO's use of lead farmers on the assumption that they would readily share knowledge with others was flawed and exposed the organisation's limited understanding of social dynamics and human motivation (see sections 6.4.1.1, 8.2.1.4 and 9.1.1) in this particular context. Some of the lead farmers saw the training as a chance to excel, while sharing would mean inviting competition. Some farmers were evidently individualistic, so collective approaches would only work for them in those situations that centrally benefited the group, such as training workshops (section 8.8.2). The culture of the communities in many respects seemed to favour people doing things independently and only working together when it was necessary³⁷. This points at the challenge facing those trying to implement participatory development programmes within communities and emphasises the need for more understanding of the contextual factors in order to make participation a more meaningful process.

These dynamics challenged the philosophy underpinning the concept of participation and participatory community endeavours. While I do not dispute the value of participatory approaches to development, I am of the view that participatory endeavours should be contextually located and adapted. Participation is socio-economically, politically and culturally influenced (section 9.1.1), a fact often ignored or glossed over by development agencies. Such oversights lead to the imposition of a particular view of participation that is only aligned with the ideology and context of the development agencies and donors.

Lesson learnt:

³⁷ Katahoire & Ndidde (1996), commenting on their experiences as participatory resident evaluators in Uganda, made the following insightful observation: "Based on our experience working with development projects in Uganda we have found reason to believe that participation in this case is quite foreign to most of the groups despite its emphasis on its greater control accountability and self reliance ... Although some traditional societies in Uganda emphasise the need for social accountability, this is not based on the principles of equality of access, democratic control and formal accounting ... Existing social norms ... include a normative belief in the value of participation, which makes it relatively easy for local communities to respond positively to demands for collective structures. This generalised support however does not imply commitment to, or experience in running projects ... many societies in Uganda in the past were dominated by hierarchical, patriarchal and individualistic tendencies. Access to power was and to some extent is still allocated, by a male elite or government. Property is vested in the household, controlled most of the time by men and managed individualistically, and inequality and patronage are to some extent accepted as natural order. Even traditional work groups dig each other's

The foregoing discussion alerts us to the fact that participation cannot be taken for granted, as different people view it differently, based not only on their ideological and cultural orientations, but also their interests and aspirations.

Implications:

There is also a need to adapt the use of participatory methods to the local conditions of communities to enable them to appreciate the value of participation fully. Failure to do this can lead to more technocratic use of the methods and approaches with technicist results.

9.6 DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In the foregoing discussions, I have tried to illustrate how contradictions in views on education and educational methodology, institutional dynamics and donor influences were evident in VEDCO's programmes. This section analyses environmental sustainability and development in the context of this study.

9.6.1 Pursuing the goals of sustainable development

This study demonstrated that pursuing the goal of sustainable development was a complicated matter study for several reasons. While bringing the three concepts of economy, society and environment together under the umbrella of sustainability was a good principle, the concept of sustainable development itself was subjected to the major contradiction of having to exist in a global capitalistic system, which is rooted in the exploitation of natural and human resources (see sections 1.3.3, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). In Uganda, the contradiction between the goals of sustainable development and global and local capitalist interests is evident in national policies, in particular the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture and the National Environmental Policy. Alongside the government policy of sustainable development runs the official development discourse that reflects neoclassical developmentalist ideals (Mshana 1992). Concepts such as the modernisation of agriculture are used uncritically, while agricultural mechanisation and monoculture as strategies for modernising the sector are seen as a given (MAAIF and MFPED 2000). Low agricultural productivity is blamed on the failure to use chemical fertilisers and

land, but they do not produce collectively. So from our experience it would seem that the group strategy is dominated by objectives and organisational methodologies which are new to most groups in Uganda.”

pesticides,³⁸ with the environmentally friendly alternatives being explored by groups like VEDCO only considered as strategies for the use by poor farmers (MAAIF & MFPED 2000).

VEDCO's pursuit of the goal of sustainable development through the promotion of sustainable agriculture, agri-business and micro finance was undermined by a number of factors. Some of the sustainable agriculture principles and practices proved difficult for many poor farmers to implement (sections 7.3.4.3 and 8.8.5). Some farmers could not get the necessary materials to make compost, others had no containers in which to make and store liquid manure and some lacked the land on which to implement the sustainable agricultural practise they had been taught (see sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 8.7.1). The question is how sustainable is sustainable agriculture or our current view of it in view of issues like the high demand for physical labour and organic inputs, both of which are not readily available to all farmers. Some farmers also complained that sustainable agricultural practices like use of compost were not as quick to yield results when compared to inorganic fertilisers. Whilst it was true that compost took a little longer than inorganic fertilisers to dissolve and be utilised by the crops, it was also true that chemical fertilisers leached and left soils in a worse state than before. Compost on the contrary would support the crops for a longer period and with less or no serious negative ecological effects. This contestation of sustainable agriculture in a way implied two things: a) that farmers' understanding of sustainable agriculture was limited; and b) the argument that sustainable agricultural practices took longer to give yields could be associated more with the 'quick fix' mentality especially among the youth, who were impatient with the processes of sustainable agriculture (section 4.4). Both factors posed a major threat to the goals of sustainable agriculture and development at large.

While LEISA recommends some limited use of inorganic chemical materials to supplement the sustainable farming methods (Reijntjes 1992), the practice in VEDCO was to emphasise the latter only for its economic affordability on the part of farmers and to distrust peasant farmers' capacity to make effective use of chemicals³⁹. This did not deter farmers from wanting to use

³⁸ The Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries [MAAIF] & Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development [MFPED] 2000:75) cites Uganda's rate of using chemical fertilisers as the lowest in the world and suggests an "intensive fertiliser drive" at farm level.

³⁹ From an interview with the coordinator in charge of sustainable agriculture and food security programme I quote "I think sustainable agriculture practices are the most appropriate for the type of people we are working with. First of all, they do not have the money to buy the chemical fertilisers. Second, I doubt their capacity to apply the chemical fertilisers and pesticides appropriately even if they got them".

them (see section 8.7.3). The extension workers themselves confessed their own dilemma in this matter. While they mainly focussed on the use of organic fertilizers and environmentally-friendly pest management (i.e. using local materials like chillies and various organic 'concoctions'), there were times when they felt compelled to advise farmers to supplement them with chemicals to control pests that had the potential to wipe out entire crops and severely affect food security and household incomes (section 8.8.5). This points to some of the dilemmas associated not only with the different ways in which different people interpret sustainable agriculture, but also the impact of the different interpretations on its implementation. According to Reijntjes *et al* (1992) and Pretty (1995), sustainable agriculture does not completely reject the use of chemical inputs but recommends that they are used carefully and in a regulated manner to supplement deficiencies in the ecosystem.

What must also be discussed is the issue of relegating sustainable agriculture to the poor, as an approach for the 'backward' who cannot afford the modern agricultural inputs as intimated in the previous discussion (also see Box 8.8). While it is commonly erroneously believed that sustainable agriculture is appropriate for resource poor farmers (MAAIF & MFPED 2000, Pretty 1995) it must be noted that the assumption is a dangerous one for the future of sustainable development approaches. This denigration of sustainable agriculture can have serious repercussions of the practice when people begin to view it as an option for the economically and technologically disadvantaged only. In my view, sustainable agriculture is an apt strategy for responding to poverty, environmental problems and the challenges against agricultural products on the international market, where such products are in a high demand compared to the inorganic agricultural products.

Lessons learnt:

The analysis shows that to pursue sustainable development in a world ruled by global capitalism, where development is still largely perceived as modernisation, is a very challenging undertaking and increasingly so given the fact that it is still misunderstood both in the government and the NGO sectors, as is evidenced by the policy contradictions observed.

Implications:

There is a need for policy developers and implementers to take deliberate steps to clarify perspectives on development and to ensure that national policies are free of aspects that contradict each other at conceptual and practical levels.

The challenge to environmental educators is to clarify and interpret sustainable development and agriculture in such a way that they will not confuse farmers and undermine their capacity to apply it effectively. The current inconsistencies in its interpretation are bound discourage and create more confusion among farmers.

9.6.2 The development agency's shift towards commercial goals

VEDCO'S shift towards commercial goals had both positive and negative implications for the implementation of environmental policy-related activities within the community. On the one hand, within a changing national and global context, commercial goals found their way into the organisation's agenda; with socio-ecological and environmental sustainability slowly being superseded by economic sustainability for the organisation, as well as farmers (see section 8.8.5). Given the organisation's growth, both in size and in aims, and perhaps particularly because of its relationship with international donors, VEDCO is now run more on corporate business principles than on those of a community association. The change has impacted negatively upon the organisation's original image as a social organisation committed to the social issues in the community.

The focus on economic goals unconsciously affects the interpretation of other goals and certainly the organisation's orientation to its partners, as is evident in the discourse where farmers, formally referred to as partners, are currently called 'clients' and 'customers' by VEDCO (sections 7.2.2.3, 7.2.4). However, as VEDCO's focus shifted the people with whom the organisation worked did not 'metamorphose' into rich farmers; they remained the peasant farmers with the same mentality, interests and aspirations.

Whilst commercialisation is not necessarily a negative practice, in this case, the question remains as to how VEDCO or any other institution in the same position can prepare its partners for the transition. For an organisation like VEDCO that began on a social welfare foundation, the change process could be very painful because the communities could see it as a betrayal

by their partners. As the organisation goes commercial, the clientele also tends to shift towards those with the capacity to cope with the demands of commercialisation, yet social welfare organisations tend to focus on the poor and less able! This unfortunately leaves the neediest people outside development ventures that were initially meant for them.

VEDCO's increased commitment to economic goals posed a greater challenge to the attainment of the broader and more holistic goals of sustainable development. With the new orientation, the organisation's social responsibility diminished, increasingly giving way to the pursuit of profits, accompanied by a new economic slogan of providing 'demand-driven services' (VEDCO 1999). Interestingly, the so-called demand-driven services lacked the necessary social orientation; it was an outright private enterprise, profit-driven and in most cases, appeared to be aimed at creating farmer entrepreneurs out of the poor peasants overnight. This is a good example of a social programme gone astray and the concept of sustainable development utterly at risk (section 8.8.6). Whilst business interests are strictly individual and private, environmental issues are public and universal in that they affect all people whether they play a part in causing the problems or not. As observed in (section 8.8.6), the farmers' private interests were increasingly taking precedence over environmental concerns as shown by farmers' renewed preference for chemical fertilisers and pesticides in order to be able either to produce quickly and pay back the loans, or to achieve the quality of products required by international buyers. This revives our earlier question as to whether sustainable agriculture is sustainable under conflicting economic, environmental and social demands and pressures. It must be noted that my concern regarding VEDCO's drift towards economic rather than social goals is not caused by an aversion towards economic interests per se, but rather the exaltation of such goals at the expense of other human concerns, including the environment, which is shared by all.

The other finding worth exploring is the value of interest groups (see section 8.3) formed as an innovation to catalyse community action. The use of interest groups can be associated with important achievements among farmers like increased participation in programme activities, improvement in production, in individual incomes and in farmers' willingness to contribute funds towards training and exposure visits (also see section 9.4.1.2). While the use of interest groups emerged as one of the most outstanding achievements of the programme, the change was accompanied by outcomes that contradicted the purpose of sustainable agriculture and development increased use of pesticides, fertilisers and micro loans, which became a burden

to some farmers and turned their dream of becoming commercially sustainable agriculturalists into an illusion (see section 8.8.6). Secondly, although the use of interest groups made farmers with an entrepreneurial spirit more committed to the programme, it also disillusioned and marginalised both the less enterprising and the uninterested. There were people like the youth, who were involved in environmentally degrading activities like the cutting of trees, charcoaling, brick making and draining wetlands (see section 4.4 and table 4.4), who did not necessarily belong to any of the interest groups, but were involved in environmentally destructive activities. Such people were left out by this approach.

On a more positive note, the value of the commercial orientation of the programme lay in its role as a catalyst that brought many committed farmers into the programme. Unlike in the earlier approaches, with the commercialisation trend, and particularly the group interest strategy that came with it, farmers showed more commitment to participate in the activities, firstly, because they had decided to pursue those activities and secondly the activities were directly related to their material and economic well-being. This raises an important point, which echoes Fagan's observation that practices to address environmental sustainability must embrace people's aspirations, fears and needs for the future (Fagan 1996). Haverkort *et al* (1991) also argues for the inclusion of communities' felt concerns as one of the major ways of motivating people to participate in community programmes, which is essential for programme implementation. He argued: "when enthusiasm is plentiful, farmers walk two full days to attend classes, innovations spread spontaneously from one farmer to another and many former problems seem to solve themselves" (Haverkort *et al* 1991:27). Farmers' participation in programme activities in the second cycle of the programme (chapter 8, from Section 8.4) contrasted sharply with what had happened in the first phase of the programme (chapter 6, also see Boxes 8.7, 8.8) when farmers were literally being begged to participate.

Lessons learnt:

The above discussion reveals that pursuing economic sustainability overshadows other forms of sustainability yet sustainable development is holistic; covering not only economic, but also social, environmental, political and even cultural spheres. This is detrimental, and as Slade and Weitz (1991) emphasise, economic gains are often made at the expense of environmental, social, political and other forms of sustainability.

The discussion also reaffirms the importance of designing environmental education programmes around the needs and interests of the people.

Implications:

There is a need for policies and programmes that emphasise the different dimensions of sustainable development, rather than partial ones including concrete implementation strategies that are holistic and integrated.

It should be realised that while shifting towards economic interests has its advantages, it should be pursued with great caution and with sober minds. This trend in practical terms portends a deeper integration into the international capitalist economic structures. While this may seem inevitable to many, given the fast moving globalisation, it must be remembered that further integration comes with greater threat of the loss of power and control not only over personal, but also national economies, politics and capacity to make appropriate decisions. My suggestion is that before shifting to more economic goals, options such as producing for northern markets or national, regional and continental ones should be carefully weighed. It is interesting to note that, within Africa some countries struggle to produce for northern markets with some of the products being rejected on flimsy claims such as 'inferior quality' yet the same countries are sufficiently endowed with favourable climate to produce to enough to meet the food demands of countries within the same region and beyond. What is depressing is that while they struggle to enter the northern markets, northern foodstuffs of questionable quality are freely finding their way in the local markets.

With regard to environmental education especially in community contexts, the implication is that it should be rooted deeply within peoples' struggles for a satisfying life. Like Fagan (1996), I agree that any community-based environmental education programme that emphasises environmental principles only for their own sake will amount to empty rhetoric that will never bear fruit in a world where environmental degradation is on the increase as a result of human actions related to the search for survival.

9.7 Concluding Comment

In the first chapter of this study I posed two questions. Based on the assumptions, debates and contestations on the value of competencies associated with participation and participatory methodologies in community contexts, I wondered how the principle of participatory learning in environment and development education could be realised in practice. I also asked whether the NGOs, as key implementers of the environmental education activities in the communities (see section 1.5.3), had the capacity to translate policy into concrete action using the suggested participatory methodology alongside their private agendas.

The analysis in this chapter has revealed that a cross-section of factors still pose a big challenge to the effective use of participatory methods of implementing environmental education activities and the attainment of the goal of sustainable development at community level. The factors are broad and multiple in nature, including: the contextual issues related to the communities, the NGO dynamics, contradictory development and educational ideologies that impact on the understanding and application of participatory learning methods and the contradictory relationship between economic development and environmental sustainability. All these factors suggest that in order for the implementation of the National Environmental Policy to be achieved, using participatory methods and with NGOs playing a central role, a number of important steps have to be taken to address the identified challenges. There is a need to take deliberate steps to reassess the community situation in order to get proper understanding of the contextual factors with their different dimensions and be able to plan new strategies that will address the different issues effectively. There is also a need to assess the capacities of NGOs, their failures and plights and develop strategies to support them where they need support rather than overestimating their capacities, without even attempting to explore the realities around the purported capacity. The government must make efforts to raise resources and support its programmes, rather than depending on NGOs which also depend on donors whose goals and ideologies often conflict with those of the local institutions. The process of developing community-training programmes should also be revisited to ensure that policy assumptions and aspirations are in harmony with the ideologies and practical orientations of the practitioners. The absence of this harmony has been illustrated as one of the major limitations the attempt to use participatory methods and approaches to implement activities related to the National Environmental Policy. Finally the integral nature of the relationship between economic

development and environmental sustainability must be emphasized and deliberate efforts made to achieve it through careful planning, training and orientation of policy makers, NGOs and other stakeholders.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the main findings of the study and provided the main lessons and implications; chapter ten represents a final reflection and assessment of the research process and the outcomes.

CHAPTER TEN

REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH

10.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I analyse and comment on the extent to which the research goal and objectives have been attained. I also comment on the PAR process and the research outcomes and give an assessment of what has been achieved by the thesis.

10.1 Extent to which research objectives have been achieved

This research had four specific objectives (see section 1.2) derived from the major goal stated in section 1.0. In response to the first objective, I developed a conceptual framework through a review of literature on general educational theory, environmental education, adult education, development and environmental ideologies (see chapter two). The framework was built around two central pillars namely: the framework of educational orientations developed by Kemmis *et al* (1983) and applied by Fien (1993) within a formal education context. It was my intention to see if it was possible to apply the same framework within a community-based educational context. The socially critical orientation, which is also emphasised in Kemmis' framework of educational orientations, formed the second pillar of the framework.

I used a socially critical framework to analyse and comment on the actions of VEDCO, the donors and the extension workers. I have demonstrated in this thesis that the socially critical framework is based on some questionable assumptions regarding empowerment, the division of society into two diametrically opposed sections of powerful oppressors and powerless oppressed and the levelling power gradients (see sections 9.4.2.1, 9.4.2.2 and 9.4.2.3). These assumptions limit it as a lens for analysing educational issues within a community context. The analysis has illustrated that society is not divided into polarised sections of powerful and powerless oppressors and oppressed a point that echoes the views of several social theorists outside and beyond the critical tradition like, Best and Kellner (1991), Foucault (1980) and Popkewitz and Brennan (1998). Popkewitz and Brennan, in particular, suggest a search for new approaches to analyse issues of power in order to overcome the limitations of critical theory. They advocated a need for "different intellectual practices to explore issues of power than those embodied in the philosophy of consciousness and its critical traditions in the social

sciences". This inspired me to overstep the limits of critical theory and use the critiques generated by social theorists outside and beyond critical theory (see section 9.4.2) in my analysis. The analysis of power relations in the community that contradicted the socially critical assumptions of power and powerlessness and the dichotomised world of oppressors and the oppressed (see sections 9.4.2.1, 9.4.2.2 and 9.4.2.3) drew on this analytical current.

Although the application of the framework of educational orientations by Kemmis *et al* (1983) was useful in analysing VEDCO's educational processes, I realised with time that the narrow compartmentalisation of educational orientations into neoclassical, liberal progressive and socially critical orientations could not fully explain educational processes within a community context. My discovery was that educational practice within a community context is broad, and meant to respond to a broad spectrum of learners' needs and interests. In which case, different types of knowledge generated in different educational orientations, are relevant to address the diversity of physical, social, economic, political and cultural problems people encounter. In short, individuals and communities need technical knowledge (see discussion of knowledge interests in section 2.3.2.1) to solve technical problems, practical knowledge to understand and interpret the environment in order to effectively operate within it, and emancipatory knowledge to overcome structural, political and ideological problems that limit their ability to control the social, economic, political and ideological dimensions of life (see section 9.4.1). This implied that the three educational orientations are not necessarily contradictory; rather they can complement each other in meeting educational and development needs of society.

In the case of the first objective of the study, my assessment is that it was partially achieved in that the conceptual framework I derived from the review of literature could not adequately be used to analyse all the research findings. At another level, the limitations of the framework were an important motivation for me to look outside and beyond the socially critical orientation for additional lenses through which to analyse the research findings.

The second objective, to hold a situational analysis to identify contextual issues related to environment and natural resources management and to establish how the NGO was responding to the environment and development needs of the community through participatory education and training, education addressed at three levels. The first level consisted of the community baseline study of the counties of Katikamu and Bamunanika, presented in chapter four, in which PRA methods were used. The situational analysis revealed the social, economic

and political dimensions of environmental degradation. For example, the macro dimension of local environmental problems was also revealed. The second level involved a review and analysis of VEDCO's past and present programmes by interviewing different cadres within the organisation and analysing programme documentation (see section 5.4.3). The third level consisted of a continuous process in which, through the use of PRA methodology within the PAR framework, I continued to generate and use contextual data throughout the research process. The information collected at the third level proved vital in shaping the direction of the programme. This objective was attained at all three levels, as illustrated in the findings presented in chapters four, five, seven, and eight.

The third objective, to engage in a participatory action research process to establish how policy was playing out in the field, was addressed through the PAR process involving extension workers, myself and farmers and the PAR cycles have been presented in chapters six, seven and eight. Achievement of this objective was slow and it represented a challenging transformative process for me, the extension workers who constituted the research team, and later the farmers. As mentioned in section 3.8, data were collected at the organisational and the community levels. The research team (see section 3.7.7) consisting of VEDCO extension workers and me collected the data at organisational level. The same team worked with farmers to collect data within the community using PRA methods, and I personally conducted the personal interviews with individual farmers (see section 3.8.2.3). The objective was achieved but with problems as illustrated in the reflection of PAR methodology in section 10.2.

The fourth objective, to critically explore and comment on environmental education methodology and approaches in a community context, was addressed during the research process and has been presented in chapters six and eight and discussed in chapter nine. The thesis illustrates that despite the intention to use participatory methods, there were difficulties in applying them. These difficulties included lack of capacity by extension workers to apply participatory methods; due to the technicist training they had received, both in schools and colleges, and the traditional one-way model of communication used in agricultural extension (see section 6.3.1). The pressure from donors upon the NGO to meet strict periodic targets (see section 7.2.3.2) overshadowed the importance of participation and often undermined the use of participatory methods (see Box 8.9). At the same time, the bureaucratic tendencies of the NGO and the technocratic development ideology shared with its donors usurped the commitment to participation and participatory methods. Within the communities, contextual

factors like poverty, limited access to land, individual contradictory interests and agendas militated against the use of participatory methods. The second PAR cycle, presented in chapter eight, involved deliberate efforts to use participatory methods and positive results were realised (see sections 8.2, 8.3, 8.4). My assessment is that this objective has been adequately achieved as the discussions have illustrated.

10.2 Reflections on the PAR methodology

The purpose of this section is to briefly comment on PAR methodology in the light of my experience during this research project. According to Hall (1993) and Maguire (1987), PAR is a process that combines the three activities of research/investigation, education and action, a point reiterated by Lotz (1996). There was evidence that the three dimensions of PAR were achieved, albeit at different levels. This evidence has been presented in chapters four, five, six, seven and eight and analysed in chapter nine of this study.

My study provides an interesting dimension of PAR. While in many cases PAR projects begin with a clear intent of being so, in this one, the idea came in after the programme had been developed. In this case, I, an external individual went into the organisation running its development programme, and sought to be allowed to integrate my research project into the programme. This had some implications regarding the evolution of the PAR process, especially when one considers the ways scholars have defined PAR, and the outcomes it is expected to generate. PAR writers, for example, emphasise the importance of participants' input into the research design, from the identification of the key issues, through to the construction of research instruments, and ownership of the research agenda (Chambers 1997, McTaggart 1997, Hall 1993, Kimberly-Anne 2001, Mbilinyi 2002). Whilst the dimension of this PAR differed from the general assumptions at the beginning, I took deliberate steps to overcome the anomaly, particularly in the second PAR cycle. In this research, it was only during the second PAR cycle that farmers, through participation in the PRA process, were able to consciously contribute ideas that were used in the design of the subsequent training programmes.

The engagement of extension workers as researchers was a challenging undertaking. Whilst I trained them in the principles and practices of PAR, extension workers did not regard themselves as researchers, but as trainers and development workers. As such, they rarely

engaged in generating any data on their own and for their own use. While in principle extension workers were to use the different programme activities as opportunities for inquiry and data collection, they only did so either when the organisation demanded such information or when I reminded them. For example they only managed to make use of field diaries when I suggested that each individual shares his or her field experiences with the rest of the group once a week. This was done for some time, but they abandoned the practice when I went back to Rhodes University (see also section 3.8.2.12). I realised that the failure was not necessarily a weakness on the part of the extension workers or an aversion to the practice, but due to the pressure they were experiencing from their employers and donors to meet operational targets. It made the research dimension appear to be an added burden to their already crowded schedule of activities, particularly because it was not one of the activities for which they were evaluated by the organisation. Out of this experience, I learnt that it is extremely difficult to integrate PAR into a programme that aims to achieve short-term targets. The implication of this is that, if PAR is to achieve its emancipatory goals, it must be part of the original goals of the programme and its implementation must be assessed in the light of the way practitioners integrate it in the programme.

In this research, I saw empowerment of all participants as a major goal of the entire process, and tried to achieve this through the use of approaches like PRA, VIPP and SWOT analysis, (see sections 3.8.2.5, 3.8.2.8 and 3.8.2.11), which have the capacity to research actively and engage participants in critical analysis of issues. The results are also judged according to the criterion of catalytic validity, as discussed by Janse van Rensburg (2001), Lather (1986b) and Reason and Rowan (1981). Here research is validated by the degree to which, through the process, participants are re-oriented, focussed and energised by understanding the reality around them in order to transform it. Comstock and Fox (1993) argue that the validity of knowledge produced in PAR can be evaluated according to three philosophical positions namely: pragmatic, historical materialist and critical. The pragmatic criterion for the validity of PAR knowledge is that it contributes to the solution of problems that are experienced by groups. Second, the historical materialist position considers knowledge as valid if it contributes to a class struggle by an oppressed group. Third, the critical criterion of the validity of PAR knowledge is its capacity to reveal the underlying (and often conflicting) social forces that are hidden beneath a surface of harmony and provoke the people to rise up and challenge the limiting forces.

This research succeeded in attaining some of the above validation criteria for PAR with the different participants. The extension workers, for example, were able to overcome the technician mindset that made them believe that they were supposed to be able to provide all answers to all problems (see Box 8.9, and section 9.4.1.1c). At another level, they were able to emerge from the state of fear of VEDCO management and voice their concerns about the oppressive working conditions and their relationship with their supervisors during the organisational and planning workshop, (see Boxes, 7.2, 7.3 and sections 7.3.3 and 7.3.4). There was evidence of positive change based on engagement in continuous frank and open review processes. The process led to continuous self-discovery and an improvement in the relations at the organisational and personal levels among the different actors, better understanding of the challenges confronting the programme and the development of pragmatic strategies (see sections 6.3.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 7.2, 7.2.2, 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5).

The awareness created in this study did not lead a class struggle by the disadvantaged to overturn the status quo, but neither did I expect it to happen, given the nature of society and the power relations described in sections 9.4.2.1, 9.4.2.2 and 9.4.2.3 in this study. The above notwithstanding, as a result of participation in the research, farmers and extension workers developed the capacity to challenge some of the unfavourable conditions that surrounded their lives. Farmers began to challenge VEDCO's erratic methods of work and failure to fulfil its obligations.

The position of the farmers as participants in the research changed from being the passive 'researched' in the first PAR cycle (see sections 6.3.1, 6.3.5) to 'active participants' (see sections 8.3, 8.3.1, 8.3.2, 8.4) in almost all activities of the research and training process in the second PAR cycle. Farmers' participation in the first PAR cycle was curtailed by the technician nature of VEDCO's original programme, in which their role had not been spelt out, beyond their being trained in sustainable agriculture in which case they were to be 'equipped' with knowledge and skills to implement programme activities.

In the second cycle, farmers' participation in the PAR process enabled them not only to be heard, but also have their ideas used to develop programmes that responded appropriately to local needs and problems (see sections 8.2.1.1, 8.2.1.2, 8.2.1.3, 8.2.1.4, 8.3, 8.3.1, 8.3.2). The positive change in attitude towards self-reliance among some farmers was another remarkable outcome of PAR engagement (see section 8.5 and Box 8.4). Farmers developed plans of

action and implemented them to the extent that VEDCO, which initially complained that farmers were lazy and unenthusiastic in implementation, were the ones failing to fulfil their part of the deal. At the pragmatic problem-solving level, I can confidently say that the PAR process led to empowerment among farmers.

The success of this PAR project lies in its ability to educate us about the fact that the attainment of emancipatory goals is a long-term step-by-step process. PAR cannot be hurried, for its pace depends on the material conditions on the ground. This is even more acute in a situation where the research process is part of a programme where the main participants (in this study the extension workers, the farmers and me) are not fully in control of the process. In this particular study, I felt discouraged on several occasions when conditions did not for example allow shorter PAR cycles, which seemed, more realistic and more likely to be beneficial to the programme. The strict observance of set targets was a major obstacle to the implementation of some of the necessary changes identified through the PAR reflective processes. This undermined PAR as a process because its ultimate strength lies in it being recursive and reflective. For example, through reflection on the progress of the implementation of the programme, the team realised the need to change the programme approach from generalised training to one that would focus more on the individual, but could not get official consent to review the programme until after six months. Such experiences made the PAR process slow and at times frustrating.

At another level, the power dynamics in the research process were also complex. In principle, the research team, including the extension workers and me, were in charge of the research process but the fact that I was the initiator of the research and, in reality, the most interested person, made the rest of the team see me as the controller of the whole process. Secondly, my knowledge of research goals and processes was also above the other team members, which meant that on several occasions I acted as a facilitator to my fellow team members. This perpetuated a skewed power relationship, but interestingly, the apparent power imbalance in my favour was always toppled by the fact that the extension workers were more knowledgeable in the technical aspects of agriculture than I and always took a leading role during the training activities. With regard to the participation of community members in the research process, in particular during the PRA, farmers regarded us as extension workers and not necessarily as researchers and our activities as part of the normal extension duties but this time taking a more participatory dimension which involved them. While it is true that farmers fully participated in

the PRA and benefited from the process, it was those of us in the team that led the process and seemed to wield more power.

10.3 Reflections on the content of this study

This study is detailed, informative and analytical which I consider to be its strengths. I have been able to present and analyse some of the data collected with the necessary details to paint a picture of the context and the dynamics. In my presentation, I have tried to take care of the different audiences I expect to benefit from the study, in particular, community educators, policy planners and development practitioners, researchers and educators in the field of community development natural resource management, NGOs and the donor fraternity. I have made an effort to use language unlikely to frustrate my audience. My extensive use of participants' real voices in text boxes and direct quotations was part of my intention to help my readers re-enact the actual scenario in the field and to reiterate the fact that this was a collaborative effort. I have also tried to present as much of the research process as possible for I believe, like many people who cherish the principles of transformative learning, that process is as important as the content, as it shapes the outcomes of our endeavours, a reality from which we can never escape. The above explanations are not meant to imply that there are no limitations in this thesis. The fact that fellow participants in the research only participated in the field based data analysis has largely excluded them from the thesis. Secondly, not all the findings generated during the eighteen month period could be presented within the confines of the thesis.

10.4 Final assessment

In this section of the chapter, I present my assessment of what has been achieved through this research. This study has demonstrated that it is not possible to rely entirely on a socially critical framework, and the framework of educational orientations developed by Kemmis et al, to analyse educational and socio-economic issues within a community context. This points at the necessity for analytical and conceptual frameworks that recognise the diversity of social phenomena and the multiplicity of options and possibilities for explaining events in life, hence the need to move outside and beyond the rigid and restrictive confines of the socially critical orientation.

My working with the socially critical framework in this research has helped me to identify some limitations within the critical tradition, both in education, and social analysis and, as a result, I

have contested some of the assumptions of critical theory, in particular those related to empowerment, and society as a dichotomised body of powerful oppressors and powerless oppressed. I have argued that, within the context of my research, where many people were struggling to achieve the basic means of livelihood, empowerment should mean more than the politicised and militant view of empowerment often emphasised in critical traditions, and include individual self-assertion, upward mobility, increased disposable income and self-esteem (see section 9.4.2.1). I have also introduced the two concepts of horizontal and vertical empowerment to refer to the different dimensions of the empowerment process. I have used horizontal empowerment to refer to transformatory processes geared towards achieving practical requirements for human survival such as adequate food, money, security, health and self-esteem. I have used vertical empowerment to refer to the processes addressing more strategic goals in life such as challenging political and ideological structures, culture, gender and social structures that undermine people's ability to live as free human beings psycho-socially and politically. My contention is that the two are organically related with horizontal empowerment forerunning vertical empowerment. Within community contexts like the one in this study, this might imply that programmes aimed at fostering community empowerment should be aware of the need to address both dimensions at the appropriate time.

I have illustrated the contextual factors, such as poverty, gender inequality, diversity in individual interests and aspirations, inequitable access to land and the associated sense of insecurity on land that not only exacerbate environmental degradation, but also undermine people's will and capacity to respond appropriately to environmental problems and challenges, even when such people are equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills. In the case of this study, efforts to implement activities related to the national environmental policy were directly undermined by contextual factors. This poses a challenge to government, development agencies, educators and community development practitioners to develop responses that are cognisant of contextual factors and their potential impact on programmes and to seek appropriate strategies for addressing them. I have also argued that problems related to community contexts are not only community-based, but also national and international, which demands responses that go beyond the local into regional, continental and global spheres.

The study has also raised some of the key limitations associated with VEDCO as an NGO involved in the implementation of activities directly related to the national goals of sustainable development, which may be applicable to other NGOs. My analysis of VEDCO's institutional

context and dynamics has established that factors such as an NGO's history, development ideology and dependency on donor funds not only affect their relationship with the communities, but also their capacity to act in a participatory manner. The study has highlighted key limitations on NGO operations (see section 9.2) that help to challenge the uncritical assumptions about NGO capacities to implement policy related activities within community context (see section 1.5.3) and raise the need for government line ministries and bodies like NEMA to work hand in hand with the NGOs to build capacity in community processes, rather than offloading the responsibilities onto NGOs that are already burdened with their own programmes.

At another level, the study illustrated that government at times frustrates its own policies by failing to honour its own commitments. The delayed implementation of the land policy (see section 9.1.4) and some of the ideas within the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (see section 9.6.1) that contradict the overall national goal of sustainable development are a case in point.

The study also shows that the use of emancipatory educational methods recommended in the National Environmental Policy is not only hampered by contradictions within the community and NGO contexts, but also by the competing educational ideologies manifested in the training programmes. The contradictions expose the underlying historical, ideological and epistemological tensions within the field of education in Uganda and the need to address them. It has also been shown that lack of training in participatory learning approaches among extension workers and their limited knowledge of the theoretical, philosophical and practical implications of different educational methods contributed to inappropriate use and often non-use of participatory methods. The study has, demonstrated that through well-planned and executed training in participatory methods, it is possible to generate some remarkable results regardless of the many contextual problems. It is therefore a challenge to the government and NGOs involved in community-based programme development and implementation to create environments that will support and nurture the appropriate use of emancipatory training methods.

With regard to the pursuit of the goal of sustainable development, this study has established that five major factors militate against the attainment of this goal, namely:

- a) The prevailing capitalist development ideology, which is based on the exploitation of natural and human resources (see sections 9.1.3, 9.3, and 9.6.1);
- b) The failure to reconcile the potentially contradictory relationship between economic development and environmental sustainability (see section 8.8.5) reflected in the pursuit of economic/commercial goals at the expense of environmental and social sustainability;
- c) The contradictions within national policies, in particular, the uncritical pursuit of agricultural modernisation as a strategy for poverty alleviation, contrary to the declared commitment to the goal of sustainable development (see sections 9.3 and 9.6.1);
- d) Challenges like poverty (see sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 8.6.1.2, 8.7.1 and 9.1.3), high demand for labour, and organic matter essential for sustainable agriculture (see section 8.7.2), and land dynamics (see section 4.2.3, 4.2.4 and 9.1.4); and
- e) Dependency on donor funds and the pressure associated with it which limit organisational freedom to effectively pursue (see section 9.3)

In the final analysis, this has been a very challenging experience for me as a researcher and educator and for my colleagues the extension workers and farmers of Katikamu and Bamunanika counties. I have particularly learnt many things and transformed in many ways. As a scholar, I have definitely grown; there have been some significant shifts in my worldview, from a strict believer in critical social theory to a more open-minded analyst, not only willing, but also able to view the world in many dimensions. I have also had the opportunity to work on a programme in which I believed, and to test many of the theoretical and practical ideas I had never had opportunity before. I can now more confidently debate issues related to the challenges and prospects of participatory programme implementation within community contexts. I have also realised that doing academic research within a community context in an ongoing programme can be very challenging and requires great commitment of time and resources. In the case of this study, I spent eighteen months in the field, but even at the end of that time, there were many unresolved issues. For example, if the purpose were to ensure the nurturing of a participatory culture in the organisation or a community, it would be self-deception for one to imagine that such fundamental changes can be achieved in a few months. My final suggestion is that researchers, development practitioners and educators spend more

time developing community or NGO capacity in community learning and problem-solving processes to handle their emancipatory efforts rather than assuming that short stints by external researchers and development agents will achieve this.

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Appendices

Appendix 4.1

Wellbeing Ranking for Nsawo village

Wealth/economic and social wellbeing categories	Ranking Criteria
<p>Group 1 (Wealthy/Rich)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have privately registered land with titles between 10 and 70 acres - Have Livestock especially cattle in large numbers - Have permanent houses,(Brick, cemented iron roofed, beautiful with strong doors and windows, - Have established families and their children are in good schools - Have enough food for home consumption and can sell some without straining home consumption, - They have several sources of income including shops, houses for renting, livestock products and taxis - Transport their produce to the markets (they don't sell to middle men - Have large well managed coffee and banana plantations.
<p>Group Two (middle class)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Most of them privately own a significant amount of land often up to 15 acres, - some don't own the land but have legal rights of occupancy and are secure on the land, - Many have some livestock but not as much as those in group one, -They have decent houses with permanent structures but less executive than those in group one, -In addition to farming they have other sources of income like retail shops, engage in buying and selling of agricultural produce both as middle men and retailers, -Can feed their families all the year round without difficulty, - Some have jobs either in government e.g. the sub-county chief and captain (a soldier) or in the private sector like mechanics, taxi drivers, and private brick layers - Some have houses for renting either in the village or in town, - have cash crops like coffee, passion fruits and bananas, - Their children are in school but not very expensive schools, - Many have established families

Wealth/economic and social wellbeing categories	Ranking Criteria
Group Three (Poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They have access to small land often not more than three acres, some have just plots with very few crops, - Some own limited livestock often goats, pigs and chicken, - Engage in activities like brick making, charcoal making, commercial fuel wood cutting, sand mining, - Some do subsistence farming, - Many of them experience perennial food shortages in their homes - Many are fairly young and are not married, - Their houses are not very decent though often built in mud brick or mud and wattle with tin roofs -Some are widows, divorced or separated women heading the households, -Some don't take children to school
Group Four (Very poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some of these are very old, sick or sickly people, -May have land but lack the energy to work it productively - Often helped by relatives - Others in this group include: the landless, casual labourers, drunkards, School leavers and drop outs, Laggards with land and energy but not willing to work - Some live in very poor conditions, temporary houses without basic health and sanitation facilities - Often live on their own without dependants - Those who have children they either send them to UPE schools or don't send them at all

Wealth Ranking for Kibiriizi Village

Wellbeing categories	Ranking criteria
Group 1 (Rich/Wealthy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have well established homes, -Have permanent property like houses -Have several reliable sources of income Those doing farming are very committed Their gardens are for business -Grow a variety of crops -Usually put into practise what is taught -Have an aim/objective -Are determined to work and maintain their farmer e.g. Mulima Mboga -Have enough land -Have enough land - they have the capacity to buy and use agricultural inputs -Price fluctuations force them to grow other crops in varieties.

Wellbeing categories	Ranking criteria
Group 2 (Middle group)	<p>They are responsible people growing enough food To feed their families, -Have some money to use for inputs -Avoid spillage of food -THEY ARE AWARE THAT FARMING CAN BE A BUSINESS -Have ability to practise farming -Have enough land -Able to take children to school - Have a variety of food Have access to loans</p>
Group 3 (the poor people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have small acreage of land • Mostly they are the old people • Have big families within one person working to get food • Most of them are sick • May have other jobs elsewhere e.g. Boda Boda, Bicycle mechanics, etc. • Their soils are poor • Some lack the ability • Some leave hatred & jealous • Poor food handling techniques

Wealth Ranking Nkuluze village

Wellbeing categories	Ranking criteria
Group 1 (wealthy/Rich)	<p>-They can afford farming on a large scale -Some have access to credit facilities -They have knowledge on modern Agriculture practices -They are interested in what they are doing. - Have the capacity to take care of all their domestic needs without straining themselves, -they have property in form of permanent assets like houses, established farms -Can transport their produce to the market -their lifestyles are much better than the rest of the business community -can educate their children in good schools</p>
Group 2 (middle class)	<p>-Some farmers have the capacity of transporting their produce to the markets -They have big land -Have animals like cows, pigs, goats and sale milk -Have easy means of transport like motorcycles and bicycles -Have enough food to feed their families and sale -Pay their casual labours -They put in a lot of effort in the production process -They participate in training -Don't have permanent jobs but they are able to pay School fees for their children -They want to learn</p>

Wellbeing categories	Ranking criteria
Group3 (the poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Farmers can manage to grow food for home consumption only -They don't have the capacity to employ casual labourers -Some are old and others sick -They are tenants -Have limited land (small pieces of land) -Don't have the capacity of renting land -Have a problem of soil exhaustion -Don't want to transform to modern Agriculture practices -Don't participate in agricultural training -Some are mobile -Some have permanent jobs and don't have time to dig -Some are drunkards -Some have big families -Youth engage themselves in store breaking

Wealth Ranking for Malungu village

Wellbeing categories	Ranking criteria
Group 1 (Rich/wealthy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They have enough capital -They have enough land -They are good savers -They have little problems e.g. family size -They are targeting markets -They are responsible and have higher determination -Some can go for credit facilities -They use the recommended agronomical practices -They get more news on Agriculture (i.e. more exposed) -Extensionist tend to concentrate on them -They prepare their fields on time.
Group 2 Middle class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They have land to use -They are energetic (thus can dig) -They are responsible -They have medium size families Their health status is good -They have fewer disturbances from wild animals -They practise proper Agronomical practices -They plant in time -Some can afford hired labour -They are creative

Wellbeing categories	Ranking criteria
Group 3 (the poor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Little land -Some are over aged -They have big families -Others are just lazy -They are prone to weather changes -They drink a lot -They are disturbed so much, by animals and diseases -They are also poor healthy -They have limited capital -Soil exhaustion is rampant in their gardens -They usually depend on family labour

Appendix 6.1

Session-based personal participation diary format

Expected action	Yes	Somehow	No
Contributed ideas			
Asked question(s)			
Answered question(s)			
Chaired group activity			
Reported back after group activity			
-			

Appendix (6.2) Daily evaluation guiding questions

1. What did you like most about the topics covered today and why?
2. What did you dislike and why?
3. What did you like about the methods used in the sessions?
4. What did you not like about the facilitation methods and approach?
5. What benefit did you receive from the practical activities organised during the sessions?
6. What are the main lessons you have learnt today?
7. Are there any things you had expected to learn from today's sessions that you have not learned?
8. What topic(s) do you feel should be revisited to enable you grasp it better?
9. How can tomorrow be turned into a better learning day?

Appendix 6.3

Notes on the reflection meeting for Agriculture extension and agric marketing units (Reflection on field activities) May 2000

BACKGROUND: When I began my initial visits to the field, I found a new programme, on food security and sustainable agriculture in the offing. The programme had just begun in Migadde, Musaale, Kibirizi and Kiteme parishes. A baseline had already been completed and a programme of intervention developed by VEDCO and agreed upon together with PLAN International. The programme developed was to be implemented using a three-pronged approach:

1. 1st, 25 lead farmers were to be selected from each of the parishes to attend practical training in sustainable agriculture and food security. The training activities were to be conducted separately for each of the parishes and it among other things included establishing demonstration gardens at parish and village levels.
2. After undergoing the training the lead farmers were to go back to their villages and each would recruit at least ten farmers and offer them similar training with the assistance of the Extension worker after which the group would establish a mini demonstration garden within the community to provide a point of reference for future learning.
3. Extension workers were to follow up the Farmers in their fields to see how they were implementing and to offer field support where Farmers needed it.

I had opportunity to attend several of the training workshops and observed that the most common method of teaching used during practical agricultural training was lecture. Even during the setting up of the demonstrations there was a lot of dominance by the extensionist and less involvement by the farmers. Third, facilitators were very fast in whatever they did often apparently leaving learners with many unclear issues.

I discussed my observations with extension workers in several meetings (Reflection meetings which I was able to influence the organisation to make Friday afternoon a free period dedicated to sharing field experiences). Extensionists' major concern was on farmers' delay and at times total failure to adopt new practices which they often attributed to laziness, dependency syndrome among farmers and logistical problems arising from the organisation's internal weaknesses. Never even once did they see themselves as a possible contribution to the weaknesses in any way (see notes on meetings and reactions SAM).

I used my experience and the outcome of meetings with extensionists to discuss with the executive director about the necessity for a review workshop about programme activities with different staff working in the field.

A day workshop was organised by the programme officer Mr Daniel Mwesigwa with two major objectives:

- To examine the progress of the implementation of the food security and sustainable agricultural programmes.
- To identify the very challenges in the implementation and seek remedies to the challenging situations.

Participants included: six extension workers, two programme co-ordinators, one programme officer, the executive director and myself as the main facilitator of the workshop. (The group decided to have me as the facilitator for several reasons).

1. I was not involved in the actual implementation.
2. I was considered more objective given the fact that I was not an employee of the organisation.
3. I had already raised a number of issues in discussions with the different staff which had made them believe that there was a need to revisit the entire programme implementation and strategy.

WORKSHOP PROCESSES: (Also refer to minutes of the workshop)

As a facilitator I started by trying to establish whether there was a common understanding of the goals and objectives of the programme among the different staff working on the programme.

We used the VIPP idea card methodology to generate ideas about programme objectives. Each participant was given three cards and on each of them he/she was supposed to write one objective of the programme he/she knew. The participants

After discussing the staff's views on objectives, we tried to compare the objectives raised by them with programme objectives to establish the variance in understanding/conceptualisation by the different staff. (Ref. to record)

I observed that much as the extensionists expressed the objectives in different ways they were very close to what had been originally set in the programme. In fact extensionists objectives seemed clearer than the original programme objectives. Clear also was that, environmental sustainability did not feature as an independent objective except as implied in phrases like "improvement of farming practices" (crop management) "use of local resources to produce food all the year round" "animal integration fertility management" etc.

I posed a question to the staff, regarding their expectations as they conducted the practical agriculture trainings. Interestingly, none of them gave any personal interest or a professional one. They instead listed the organisational indicators of success, like: 25 farmers setting up mini demonstration gardens their communities, lead farmers recruiting new farmers.

This made me wonder at the kind of independence and flexibility in thinking plus personal innovativeness on part of the extensionists as they implement their work. I asked myself a question. Are these people working as independent thinking individuals or just fulfilling a duty as prescribed by organisation? (This was followed up later in the research at the levels of individual interviews)

Having explored staff interpretation of goals and expectations, I tried to open up the discussion on what had been done so far in the field. Extensionists on their part believed every activity earmarked for the period had been done apart from one parish (Kiteme) where practical trainings had not been conducted. They however raised a number of problems encountered.

- (a) The demonstration gardens were not standardised, each look different from other.
- (b) Some of the materials planted, particularly banana suckers had been affected by weevils.
- (c) Many farmers despite their involvement in the training were not adopting the new practices. It was difficult to tell the difference between a farmer who had attended training and those who had not.
- (d) It was still difficult to reconcile the big numbers of farmers attending training with the low numbers of those willing to transfer the knowledge and skills to their farms.

- There was also concern on the misinterpretation of extension messages or deliberate contradiction of the teaching of extensionists. e.g. some farmers continued intercropping maize with bananas and cassava, which is discouraged as all of them are heavy feeders.

- Some farmers were also inter-cropping bananas with passion fruits which had also been discouraged as both tend to grow to the same level which negatively affect each others productivity.

- Many farmers were not willing to work on the collective/collective demonstration garden much as it was small and were only expected to dedicate up to two hours a week depending on its state and season.

- Extensionists reported that some farmers were complaining about some of the sustainable agriculture practices, that they were very time-consuming and required a lot of labour and energy. Double digging and Heap compost making were singled out as most demanding.

What are the possible causes of these problems? (I asked the group to brainstorm on the possible causes of the problems raised). In sub-groups of threes, staff tried to identify the causes of the problems and reported back.

Reported causes

- Demonstrations not standardised because even VEDCO did not have a clearly specified standard for demonstration gardens.
- Extensionists had thought it most appropriate to use locally available planting materials to avoid creating the feeling that what was locally available was bad hence the insistence on using local planting material. Unfortunately the suckers were not properly disinfected, while others were mostly of poor quality.
- About farmers not adopting new practices the discussion revealed that there could have been several reasons, some of them being the procedure and criteria for selecting lead farmers and the timing off the training in relationship with farming season inadequacy of land.
- Extensionists also reported that lack of adequate land made some farmers behave as if they did not understand what was taught. Inter-cropping of unrecommended crops was also associated with insufficiency of land and to many farmers inter cropping was a survival strategy. Lack of labour was also mentioned as a potential cause of this, (the question here was, had farmers really understood the disadvantages of such inter cropping?)
- Lack of co operation and unwillingness of farmers to work on collective Demonstrations, was associated with several causes,
 - (6) Some farmers saw it as offering free labour to those people on whose land the Demonstration's were established.
 - (7) Poor timing, demonstration were being established at a time when many farmers were supposed to be busy with their own gardens trying to beat the season, which was almost ending.
 - (8) Conflicting interests among farmers some of them were not actually interested in what was being promoted demonstration. Others saw with on the Demonstrations, as too much, on so small a plot.

Some farmers according to the extensionists selected the hard and rough mature bush as sites for Demos, which made their colleagues feel they were being exploited as a source of labour to do what their friends has failed to do on their own (Katende E.) Other farmers it was said were interested in free things the moment they saw that VEDCO was no offering such things they withdrew.

Much as the extensionists had raised a number of issues, I felt that there were possibly still some other issues underlying the issues mentioned. I asked for clarification on the following issues:

- (7) How were the lead farmers selected?
 - (8) What were the criteria for selection of demonstration site and the actual process of selection?
 - (9) How the choice of crops to be promoted was reached?
 - (10) How would the lead farmer benefit from the strategy followed,
 - (11) How would the multiplier farmer benefit?
 - (12) What was the relationship between VEDCO and these farmers? A donor? A facilitator? A partner?
- I felt that answering these questions would help in explaining a number of issues still unclear about the activities.

Selection of the 25 Lead Farmers who attended the practical agriculture training workshops

While it was initially thought that the communities had selected the farmers, the programme officer informed us that he, together with the Parish chairman had done the selection of those farmers they considered most appropriate according to their performance in their homes (gardens)

Extensionists said some of those selected were not the appropriate choice for the rest of the community some were arrogant & unapproachable much as they were good farmer. Others were situated in very distant places which could not be easily accessed by the rest of the community, others were not actually farmers but business men, others had farms but also had other jobs which took most of their time and left most of the work to labourers (Rwambibi). Because there had been an earlier tendency by PLAN to give free things to such farmers, the chairman also selected relatives and friends who pulled out immediately they sensed that no material benefits were accompanying the training activities.

Selection of demonstration site was based on the following

- a) Fertility of soils at a given site- in other words the soils had to be fertile (*why not choose an infertile site use the recommended land management and agronomical practices to prove that change is possible, otherwise using an already fertile piece of land may not prove any point to the farmers*)
- (b) Accessibility to the main road for publicity purpose i.e. to attract passers.
- (c) Capacity of the farmer donating the plot to farm his/her remaining plot. The assumption was that such a farmer would never fail to manage the Demo even if others failed to assist him/her.
- (d) Willingness of the farmer to offer his land for demonstration purposes.

While the above criteria sounded plausible, the final selection was not democratically done, in that the entire group of farmers did not digest the criteria to make an informed decision. The chairman most of the time influenced the final decision of where to locate the demonstrations.

Choice of crops to be demonstrated on the community demonstration gardens

According to the co-ordinator, executive director and programme officer, the choice of crops to demonstrate was based on the findings of the baseline survey conducted prior to the designing of the food security and agricultural enterprise project. (also ref to baseline report). I asked a related question as to whether survey findings were disseminated in the community and if so how? It was revealed that much as community members participated in providing information during the survey they never had opportunity to endorse its outcome, let alone understanding the details. It was suggested that more dissemination at the grassroots be carried out to ensure that all stakeholders understood the reasons for the different activities of the project other wise many of them saw the project as an imposition.

How would the lead farmers benefit from the Agricultural activities they were being made to spearhead? I had a feeling that lead farmers would be very co-operative and willing to assist others if they were doing something that was beneficial to them in some way.

We brainstormed with staff as to what were the benefits of the programme to lead farmers to motivate them to work with others and we came out with a list of benefits including:

- Skills and knowledge as trainers.
- Knowledge in planning farm activities.
- Skills and knowledge in sustainable agriculture practices
- Prestige and self esteem as a leader
- Home improvement related to continuous visits by other people***
- Planting materials offered for the demonstration established on his land.

While discussing the issue of planting materials provided for demonstrations, some project staff argued that farmers should pay cash for the planting materials because they were going to benefit from them when such material matured. Others went ahead to argue that farmers were only fond of getting free things, which they would fail to take care of in the long run. It was almost unanimously agreed that farmers begin to pay for the materials, but I saw it as unfair to say that they enjoyed free things yet they had offered ½ an acre of land for demonstration. I persuaded the team to re-examine the value of land vs. the value of planting materials plus the invasion of the farmers' freedom when he allow people to frequently visit his home to learn from the demonstration.

{I saw the staff attitude as unfair, paternalistic and denigrating the dignity of the individual farmer and the spirit of voluntarism exhibited by farmers. It appeared closely related to the top down approaches commonly employed by govt and NGO's in development projects}

It was finally accepted that let VEDCO look at the farmer's offer of land as his contribution in the partnership.

- Lead farmers were also to benefit from the income generated in the materials grown in the demonstration.

Benefits for multiplier farmer

The multiplier farmer was benefiting in exposure to new knowledge and skills in sustainable agriculture and food security, Extension Services

The question here was, are the benefits to multiplier farmers enough to boost their motivation to participate in programme activities? Do the benefits reflect the farmers' needs as reflected in the baseline? *(These issues were later followed up in the interviews and PRA)*

- Relationship between VEDCO and farmers as viewed by the extensionists?
- Staff saw farmers as victims of dependency all the time expecting free things from VEDCO and PLAN. I followed the discussion and noticed that the relationship implied was that of a superior and an inferior, with the superior mandated to help uplift the inferior. Staff continuously referred to farmers as laggards, lazy, dependent, uncooperative, not understanding, spoilt etc.

{Farmers' context- these were also followed up in the farmers' interviews}

Realising that most of the problems and challenges raised were basically external to the organisation and the individual we decided to specifically examine the organisation and the staff for weaknesses and problems.

Organisational Review

We divided the group into management/ administration and extensionists. Each of the groups was given a task to identify problems related to the implementation of the agriculture and food security programme, from a professional/personal/technical and administrative perspective.

Extensionists raised a mixture of technical and administrative issues in the group. Issues that qualified as technical/professional included:

- They felt the use of demonstration as a technique, had weaknesses ranging from biases in selecting demonstrators to failure to stimulate farmers to transfer skills into their daily lives (it was beneficial because the demonstration got planting materials and the garden remained permanently his/hers).

- Some sustainable agriculture practices were found to be extremely cumbersome, almost discourage most elderly and we all farmers, while laggards were using it as an excuse for not adopting new practices e.g. double digging, heap compost
- Extensionists felt that they lacked skills on community mobilisation and facilitation. They admitted they had enough technical knowledge and information on agriculture to transfer, but often had difficulties in effectively transferring it to the farmers (Tenywa).

Poor selection of farmers was associated with lack of mobilisation skills among extension workers which made them to rely greatly on parish chairmen who had also not been appointed merit.

(I had also realised lack of facilitation skills as a problem in the sessions I attended. Most of the time lectures were delivered to farmers like students in a formal school situation. Under such circumstances it was often the better educated farmers that responded and many times it became a dialogue between the elite farmers and the extensionists, with the less educated withdrawing and at times dozing off. A similar experience existed in the field during demonstration, extensionists were fast and at times did things, which they should have let the participants do. The active participants always carried out the activities while the slow and reserved ones looked on and one wondered whether they were following the activities. Skills to involve every body were lacking and the pressure from the donor and the organisation apparently aggravated).

_ Extensionists also admitted lack of knowledge in farm business education-This according to them was a major hindrance in their bid to motivate the learners by relating farming to income generation during training. Farmers for example demanded to be taught to make feasibility analysis of their activities including cost-benefit analysis and budgeting but extensionists lacked these skills and feared to let farmers know that they lacked the skills

There was another complaint by extensionists regarding knowledge and skills on agronomical practices of high value crops like okra, chillies and hot pepper. There were on very high demand among farmers but extensionists instead spent their time teaching about banana vegetable and root crop growing which farmers felt they had enough knowledge of-

The extensionists group raised a number of administrative problems limiting their ability to perform.

Logistical constraints

- Insufficient fuel for field worker
- (lack of casual labour at the field office)
- Insufficient motor cycles
- Delayed/not provided (inputs for field worker)
- Lack of protective gear for riding motor bikes
- Lack of demonstration kits
- Lack of strategy

Administrative issues

Poor planning leading to unscheduled activities displacing scheduled ones

- Disorganisation of follow up schedules
- Undelivered promised materials such as planting materials for some farmers who offered their land for demonstration.
- Land for demonstration

PROBLEMS AS SEEN BY COORDINATORS

Co-ordinators saw high targets set by the NGO partners particularly/plan, as a big obstacle to effectiveness and efficiency.

- Lack of consistency in following up activities already started was a major contributor to the failure of programme activities.
- Lack of exposure trips.
- Extension packages to farmers were not available.