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# Empowering People? World Vision & 'Transformatory Development' in Tanzania

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*Tim Kelsall & Claire Mercer*

**Ideas of participatory development and empowerment have become central to contemporary development discourse. This article identifies two axes of tension within this discourse. First is the disturbing thought that by empowering a 'community' a development project can *dise empower* groups or individuals within that community. Second is the paradox whereby *external* agents are perceived as necessary to install *internal* desires and capacities for individual and community autonomy. The article presents empirical data from research into two projects by the NGO World Vision in northeast Tanzania. The aim is to show that the dilemmas of development in practice turn around these axis of tension, as the attempts to empower the 'community' benefit disproportionately an elite – the idea of development as 'empowerment' inserted into the community from the outside.**

During the past decade NGOs have succeeded in capturing an increased share of official development aid. NGOs of various hues assert of themselves, as do their advocates, that they are uniquely equipped to facilitate a 'grassroots' or 'bottom-up' kind of development, and that they have the skills and dedication to 'empower' the poorest of the poor by utilising a participatory approach (Cernea, 1988; Clark, 1991; Drabek, 1987; Edwards and Hulme, 1992; Fowler, 1988). Such claims resonate with sections of the donor community disillusioned with inadequacies of state-based development in Africa, and they chime also with a global ideological climate hostile to the state. This article examines the shifting meanings of 'participatory development' and 'empowerment' as conceptualised and practised by NGOs in the light of research into two World Vision projects in northeast Tanzania. We begin by discussing some of the ambiguities in the discourse on 'empowerment', followed by an examination of World Vision in Tanzania, before discussing general insights issuing from two 'Area Development Projects' (ADPs) that illustrate some of the contradictions of contemporary mainstream development discourse.

## Participatory Development & Empowerment

'Empowerment' has occupied a central place in mainstream development discourse since the early 1990s. Following recent debates within the development literature 'empowerment' is understood in this article to refer to the process by which poor and disenfranchised men and women come to be critically aware of their socio-political and economic situation within their local (national, or international) context (Friedmann, 1992; Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1997). Empowerment therefore has certain psychological elements. To 'be empowered' involves a qualitative change in an individual's self-perception, and therefore in his or her ability to actively alter the

'status quo'. The process of empowerment involves the poor and excluded actively articulating their social and political needs within the context of a variety of 'oppressive relationships' which range from the domestic and private to the international and public.

Empowerment is closely linked to notions of 'participatory' development. Only if people participate in choosing, setting and pursuing development goals will they be empowered. Participating is part and process of being empowered, of becoming, in other words, autonomous. In liberal understandings of empowerment, it is *individual* men and women that should participate and that ought, thereby, to be empowered. This is linked to the central role of the rational, self-authoring, autonomous individual self in liberal philosophy and ideology. In marxist or communitarian thinking by contrast, collectives, either in the shape of classes or communities, are the more natural targets for empowerment, insofar as this language is used. Mainstream development discourse, for its part, tends to be conducted in a broadly liberal idiom. But its discourse contains an internal tension, as we hope to show, since it sometimes equivocates on the question of whether it is poor individuals, poor classes, or poor communities that should be empowered, and thus the priority for development strategy.

It is important, one might argue, for development thinkers and practitioners to be clear about whom it is that is becoming empowered. This is because the empowerment of collective subjects, such as communities, is compatible in principle with the *disempowerment* of specific groups, and/or large numbers of individuals within those communities. In particular, it is compatible with substantial economic inequality, as well as with the infringement of certain 'rights' held to be essential to the ability of the individual to make choices. Despite these tensions, much of the literature glosses over such questions by simply referring to the empowerment of 'the community', the 'poorest', the 'marginalised', the 'beneficiaries', or just 'women' (Cleaver, 1999). There are two central problems here; first, is the assumption of a homogenous 'community' (or group of women, or the 'marginalised') who are to become 'empowered'. As mentioned above, this ignores the fact that communities are not level playing fields in which everyone works harmoniously for the equal benefit of all, but are cross-cut along lines of class, race, gender, ethnicity, age, and so on (Desai, 1996; Galjart, 1995; Midgley et al. 1986). Second, if it is the *community* that is to be empowered, where are the boundaries of that community to be drawn? The household, extended family, lineage, village, ethnic group, region, even nation, are all potential contenders. Once again, empowerment at any one of these levels of community is not incongruent with disempowerment at others. These tensions are reproduced in the dilemmas and contradictions of liberal development discourse: exhortations to respect cultural diversity and the rights of communities exist side by side with injunctions to improve education, encourage equality and erase patriarchy (Williams and Young, 1994). Such contradictions, as we shall see, are reflected in both the discourse and practice of World Vision's development projects. Exploring these ambiguities is important, since transnational NGOs – World Vision being the biggest – play an increasingly large role in the provision of welfare and development services to the world's poor.

Empowerment discourse also raises a set of problems familiar to debates on freedom and the subject; problems which turn on the contradiction between autonomy and heteronomy. Principally, how is it possible for *external* interventions to install *internal* capacities for autonomous action? (Rahnema, 1992; Nelson and Wright, 1995). The perceived necessity on the part of development agencies to inject 'change-agents',

'motivators' and 'conscientizers' into target communities implies that those communities are unable of their own volition to realise what their 'interests' are, or what the 'oppression' against which they must fight might be. In this light, the agenda of 'empowerment', which is often read as an attempt to strip away from subjects the encumbrances which constrain and imprison their 'true' selves, facilitating an efflorescence of their innate potentialities, is equally entitled to be understood as a project which secretes an insidious form of power, subjugating and subjectifying its objects in the process of fabricating them as 'subjects'. In short, the 'beneficiaries' or 'cooperants' in development projects, are only able to achieve their autonomous destiny by being transformed from outside. In the course of this transformation, their old selves, expressed through a variety of ways-of-being in the world, stand to be destroyed. In other words, the 'gains' of empowerment entail, as their obverse, 'losses' (Foucault, 1982; Laclau and Zac, 1994; Williams and Young, 1994; Sandel, 1992). The tension between autonomy and heteronomy emerges clearly in our discussion of World Vision's relation to its target communities.

### World Vision Tanzania (WVT)

In the core values of World Vision Tanzania we find inscribed both of the aforementioned aspects of empowerment. World Vision regards itself as an, 'international partnership of Christians', the mission of which is to, 'follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God' (World Vision, 1992). It focuses on 'transformational' development, which is community based, involves a special concern for children, and accords women and men an equal respect. It is an approach that 'celebrate[s] the richness of diversity in human personality, culture and contribution' (World Vision, 1989), at the same time as seeking, without apparent irony, to 'change unjust structures affecting the poor' (World Vision, 1992). The NGO 'give[s] priority to people before money, structure, systems and other institutional machinery' (World Vision, 1989). Participation is regarded both as a means and an end to the development process.<sup>1</sup>

World Vision has been working in Tanzania since 1981. It receives a proportion of its funding through 'sponsorship' of local children by Western individuals, and a proportion from official development aid. At the time of fieldwork it was the largest international NGO in the country, involved in 72 projects with a target population of over 2 million people. Initially, it worked through local churches and local governments (forming projects known as Church Community Development Programmes, CDPs), but more recently it has pioneered a new approach, the Area Development Project (ADP). An ADP covers all the villages in a local government Division, creating a parallel structure of development administration.<sup>2</sup> Each village elects a Village Development Project committee (VDP), and also elects a representative to a committee which coordinates the Area Development Project. Also represented on the ADP committee are special representatives for health and water, local government councillors, and a Project Coordinator (PC, a World Vision employee). The ADP meets once a month and provides a forum in which the progress, problems and achievements of the various projects are discussed, through which requests from VDPs for new projects are filtered, and where a bridge is provided between the ADP, World Vision, and the local council. All its representatives are volunteers. The ADP employs local government extension officers and community development officers on an *ad hoc* basis. A proportion of the funding for ADP projects is contributed by villagers, who also contribute labour. World Vision makes up the shortfall.

The aim of World Vision Tanzania is eventually to register ADPs as independent, largely self-sufficient, NGOs. It has a number of indicators for helping determine when an ADP is ready for independence. The indicators incorporate a number of 'observable changes in the value system of people and community as a whole', including an increased 'spirit of cooperation and sharing'; increased interest toward 'productive endeavours' as opposed to 'indulgence' and 'vices'; increased desire to study and share the Word of God; a shift from 'apathy and resignation' to 'positive attitudes toward development'; 'increased confidence', 'feelings of self-worth', and 'dignity' (World Vision Tanzania, n.d.). More practically, it is expected that the ADP will have a core community group or committee facilitating development and sustaining people's participation; people should have a steady source of income to meet basic needs, and there should be an established network for resource generation, relations with government, and NGOs (Ibid.). To this end, the focus of World Vision's approach is on 'community capacity building'. It has a dynamic Capacity Building Division at its Arusha Head Office, dedicated to strengthening the capacity of both its own staff and the communities with which World Vision works.

World Vision's desire to encourage participation and democracy within the structures of the ADP, together with its emphasis on targeting the poor, challenging unjust structures, respecting gender equality, and increasing production, identifies it as the type of organisation suitable to advancing the empowerment agenda in Tanzania.

*We see people coming together in communities to plan and implement programmes for their own development ... We have a dream where ... transformational development empowers the people of Tanzania to be responsible for their own development (World Vision, 1995).*

World Vision aims to create active citizens able to choose, articulate and pursue their own goals within a broad community consensus. Such an endeavour clearly resonates with more secular notions of 'empowerment'. For WVT, the participation and empowerment of the *communities* with which they work is the central objective of the Area Development Programme. In other words, the concrete manifestations of development projects (such as schools, health facilities) are not simply an end in themselves. They are rather the means by which to foster participatory development and community empowerment.

## The ADPs

Research for this article focused on two of WVT's ADPs based in the northeast of Tanzania; Moshono ADP<sup>3</sup> in Moshono Division, Arumeru District (Arusha Region), and Sanya ADP<sup>4</sup> in Siha Division, Hai District (Kilimanjaro Region). WVT have had a presence in both areas since the early 1980s. The Moshono ADP was begun in 1991 and is something of a showcase project. It comprises 14 villages, with a total population of around 70,000 people. Its main purpose is:

*To change the attitude of the people of Moshono towards development and enable them to realise their state of underdevelopment, appreciate their own development, plan and utilise their local resources (World Vision, 1996:1).*

To this end the ADP sponsored projects in agriculture, water, health, education and evangelism. Similarly, the Sanya ADP is involved in much the same types of development activity, though the project in Sanya is not considered to be of 'showcase' quality and its future was uncertain at the time of research. World Vision

Tanzania has worked in the area since the early 1980s and the current ADP covers all 15 villages in Siha Central and Siha East wards, involving an estimated population of 60,000.

Research on the Sanya ADP focused on two villages in the project, in which interviews were conducted with VDP members and members of the Village Government. In addition, focus groups were held with groups of male and female participants respectively. ADP meetings were attended for both projects. To gain an overview of the way in which the Moshono ADP functioned, interviews were held with a selection of ADP committee members from a range of different villages. Noticeable in both cases was the elite status of ADP and VDP representatives, the majority of whom had previous experience of representing their communities in Village Government, as either employees or elected members.<sup>5</sup>

### **Bottom-up Commandism?**

Two significant factors emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions. First, discussions in Moshono revealed an agreement that the ADP was more effective and efficient than the District Council in distributing services to the community.<sup>6</sup> The main difference was that World Vision's planning process was simpler. Government projects passed up a hierarchy of development committees which conducted various investigations before reaching the full council, from there they went to regional development committees, then to the central government and finally back down again. It could take three years between a Village Development Committee deciding, for example, that it wanted iron sheets for a school, and the sheets' delivery. At any stage of this process the idea could be squashed by political interests, the materials could be diverted elsewhere, or the money might fail to come because of budgetary crises. All informants also claimed that materials donated by World Vision reached their intended destinations, because the VDPs had the strength and self-confidence to resist political interference, should it occur. In addition, the World Vision planning process was transparent and easy to understand, from the stage of a community deciding on something to the stage of it receiving materials and completing a project. By contrast, government officials and politicians would sometimes arrive out of the blue and make promises of materials, and some time later, if they were lucky, materials would just arrive.

The second interesting finding was that it was difficult to assess the content of people's participation, or to distinguish any difference between that and 'mobilisation'. Representatives' explanations of how the planning process takes place were patchy and inconsistent. However, from the various responses it is possible to piece together an ideal-type scenario: Ideally, the community would decide in a Village Government meeting on the kind of project to pursue. The VDP together with the Village Government would be given the task of making plans, and it would begin to organise people for contributions in money and labour. At the same time the VDP would take a request to the relevant committee of the ADP. If the ADP committee agreed to the project it would be aired at the ADP full council and if passed there (which would depend in part on the contributions already made by the community), it would organise to apply for money or to allocate existing materials. While continuing to organise the community, the VDP would supervise the employment of those materials. While inscribing a participatory moment there are definite commandist overtones to this model. These were reinforced by the language used by some of the representatives to the ADP, which suggested that community input into

the actual decision making process was minimal, and limited only to articulating in broad terms what type of project they would like to see. For example:

*We meet once a month and give a report to Village Government. The VDP is between the ADP and the Village Government, and when we want our projects to be implemented we go to the Village Government where the sub-committees are automatically informed and they then go to the wananchi<sup>7</sup> and inform them about the projects (Moshono ADP).*

Another informant stated that:

*It is difficult for people to refuse to contribute because they have water problems, so everyone wants to contribute. We communicate with the wananchi through holding a joint meeting with Village Government, where we explain to the wananchi about the intended project (Moshono ADP).*

If able-bodied people failed to contribute money or labour to the Moshono ADP it emerged that they would be fined: 'We call a village meeting and we decide together what the fine will be for people who don't contribute'. If a person was unable to pay a fine, his or her property could be confiscated. One representative explained how they were fortunate in their village to have a lock-up, where non-participants could be put overnight or for an unspecified period. This however had only been resorted to on a few occasions. Significantly, this particular informant frequently used the term *kuhamasisha* (to mobilise) in describing relations between the VDP and ordinary villagers. The informant was asked whether there was a difference between *kuhamasisha* (to induce, motivate, mobilise) and *kushiriki* (to cooperate, participate). She responded, 'They're the same; aren't they?' Whether individuals are empowered through this type of 'participation' is at least open to question.

The blurred line between participation and mobilisation was further evident in discussions with villagers from the Sanya ADP. In particular, the extent to which people felt any kind of 'ownership' of the project was highly questionable. Several informants outlined the manner in which projects were often hi-jacked by village elites, and the manner in which the majority of the residents were required to 'participate' through mechanisms more easily recognisable as forms of 'mobilisation'. This is evident from the following three encounters:

*It took a long time to lay the pipes because the community had to participate, to pay the workers for their labour. When the project started as a World Vision project it was not seen as a community project and people thought, 'this is a World Vision project, it's not our work'. It took us a long time to educate people that they had to contribute, they didn't understand, they thought it was all the work of World Vision and that World Vision was providing all the money, so it took time to educate us all ... when the villagers were told that they had to contribute money they thought the leaders were trying to cheat them out of the World Vision money and use it for themselves (VDP in Sanya ADP).*

**CM:**<sup>8</sup> What does WVT do in the village?

**VDP:** *It helps with water and schools. Through child sponsorship the goal is to manage to have good schools and clean water for the children.*

**CM:** Who decided on these goals?

**VDP:** *They are the ideas of the church priest and the village leaders (VDP in Sanya ADP).*

*WV came through the churches, they started the KCCDP<sup>9</sup> which was lead by church leaders, and village leaders were also invited because they are the people who lead the farmers to do the labour, but villagers did not know how the project was going on (VDP in Sanya ADP).*

Several points emerge from these comments about the nature of WVT's participatory planning process. First, it appears that the concept of participation has been presented to the community in terms of contributions of cash and labour. Certainly, it is clear that this is how the villagers have interpreted the WVT project, and their contribution to it. Second, the villagers are represented (by a resident) as passive subjects waiting for development to be done 'for' them. WVT is seen as the active agent mobilising residents who need to be 'educated' about their role in the development process. Third, it appears that the goals of the project were not decided upon following a full consultation process with the entire community: certainly, the community now feels little ownership of the goals or the project process. Rather, it has been the traditional village leaders (church elders, church employees, and members of village government) who have had the greatest influence over the ADP. Finally, villagers seem to be generally uninformed about the project, its mechanisms, its representatives, and WVT itself. When asked directly, none of the women present at a group discussion in one of the villages in the Sanya ADP knew who their village representatives on the ADP committee were. In a second village, where WVT had been less active in terms of project work, even less was known about the NGO and the project. Many respondents in focus group discussions did not even seem to be aware that they were part of the Sanya ADP. Evidence points toward the 'empowerment' of an elite, not toward that of poor individuals, nor the 'community' as a whole.

## **World Vision in Moivaro**

Greater insight into these issues was provided by an intensive study of Moivaro Village, Moshono ADP. The Village Government in Moivaro was well-resourced, with a new office, a Village Executive Officer who always came to work, and a village messenger. It appeared relatively effective in mobilising its population for development. World Vision's ADP had assisted in the rehabilitation of school classrooms, the provision of improved maize seeds to 50 farmers, the supply of improved dairy cattle to 25 farmers (based on the 'Heifer-in-Trust' pass-on scheme), the laying of a section of water pipe, construction of a tank at the water source, and the distribution of maize as famine relief. But this is not to say that villagers were being empowered. Delving beneath the surface of these showcase 'successes', research suggested that – at least for some people – mobilisation for development was inspired by fear of reprisals as much as by enthusiasm for the projects. One explanation for this was that the collective goods for which contributions were induced tended to accrue more to the wealthier members of the village. One example was provided by the village school. The building of extra classrooms and teachers' houses at the school at Shangarau ought to have benefited all the villagers. However, for some villagers the burden of paying school contributions was greater than for others. Contributions could add up to over 10,000 Tshs<sup>10</sup> a year. The researcher was told that some parents could not afford to send their children to that school, and that some children did casual labour or petty trade so as to be able to pay fees. The high level of contributions for various projects was raised time and again by poor farmers in Moivaro. They felt that the Village Chairman was not sympathetic to their situation: he was an aggressive man who could not be argued with. His main support base was among members of the village elite. To their minds he was rich, failed to consider those who were poor, and forced through decisions with which not everyone could easily comply. The issue would

repay further research, but there is at least *prima facie* evidence that World Vision's presence in Moivaro accelerated the exploitation of the poor by the rich.

The clearest insight into the relative lack of success World Vision have had in transforming the life of the community in Moivaro was provided by the cows project. The project was of a similar type to that pioneered by another NGO working in the area – Heifer Project International (Heifer Project had already donated a number of cows to Moivaro). Under the terms of the project, cows were supposed to be distributed, by the VDP, to people who could afford to keep a cow but who could not afford to buy one. They were then supposed to return two female offspring to the project, one of which would be passed on to another poor farmer. However, the role of the VDP in this endeavour, and also the process by which the VDP came to be constituted, was opaque to ordinary villagers. Research disclosed that members of the VDP, together with the PC, selected a number of poor farmers to go for training in expectation of receiving heifers. Subsequently, several farmers could not afford to spend two weeks away from their families. Instead of looking for other poor farmers, the Village Government, and certain members of the VDP, chose to allocate cows to themselves or their relatives. Of the 25 cows, three went to sub-village chairmen and seven went to either members of the VDP or their spouses. Most of these people were not poor. Research based on a previous, participatory wealth-ranking exercise (Kelsall, 2000), indicated that in total, five farmers in the top wealth group received cows, four in the second, four in the third, four in the fourth, and four in the fifth.<sup>11</sup> Many of these farmers already had milk cows. Some had more than one.

The way in which cows were distributed, and people's lack of knowledge about the VDP, had caused some resentment in the village. In January 1996, in the face of complaints from villagers about the way cows had been allocated, and on the advice of the former PC, the largely invisible VDP was called to account in a village meeting – its shadowy members were expelled, allegedly for allocating cows in a secretive and 'friendly' way. Other members, mostly new, were elected. But this empowering moment proved not to be sustainable: the subsequent committee, again drawn largely from the village's elite, seemed hardly more disposed to involving poorer members of the village in their decisions. Neither was it furthering World Vision's stated aims of gender equality. A young female representative had been prevented from representing the village at the ADP by the VDP Chairman, in collusion with the village Chairman and possibly the woman's husband.

Very few people we spoke to knew the members of the VDP. A few were able to name one or two people on the committee; only one knew both the representatives for his sub-village. Few villagers understood how it was supposed to work. Most did not know how often it met, or where it gave reports. Some knew that it gave reports at village government meetings, although one person said these were read by the village executive officer. It seems also that it was the sub-village chairmen who were in charge of mobilising labour and contributions for World Vision projects. These findings seemed to confirm what we were told by one member of the original VDP, that, *VDP imemezwa na serikali* (the VDP has been swallowed by the government).

Notwithstanding the relative success of service provision, it was clear that the type of development sponsored in Moivaro was not particularly participatory, nor was it leading to any discernible psychological empowerment of the poor. Instead, as in Kilimanjaro, development projects tended to trace a groove worn both by colonial development schemes under which labour was mobilised by the chief or headman, and by self-help schemes associated with the post-colonial government's policy of

'Socialism for Self-Reliance'. One explanation was that World Vision's respect for community self-determination left development coordination in the hands of people who simply emerged as leaders. Such people tended to be part of established elites, and their interests were not always identical to those of poorer villagers. The problem for developmentalists – over whether it is the individual or the community that is the target of their interventions – is posed with particular starkness here.

At the time of fieldwork little effort was being made to bypass these elites and conscientize the poor directly. A notable exception was provided by an interview with a poor farmer who was a member of the original VDP. She had recently been to a workshop organised by World Vision and was vocal in stressing her right and responsibility to interrogate leaders about the use of funds for development projects. Whether she was successful in practising this right is another matter. Ironically, she had only attended the workshop because she had received a missive from the village chairman instructing her to do so. The example is illuminating: an outside agency – World Vision – is required to 'empower' an actor inside the community. Yet the vector for its intervention is another actor – the village chair – whose interests are potentially opposed to its objectives. Thus, both contradictions – between the internal and external (autonomy versus heteronomy) and those peculiar to the internal (homogeneity versus heterogeneity) are, in this example, articulated and instantiated.

This articulation is repeated in another, perhaps surprising, finding of the research. While poor villagers in Moivaro often had complaints about the VDP, they were unanimous in their belief that World Vision was a good thing, and a bonus to the community. Failures to elevate the poor notwithstanding, the presence of WVT in Moshono was generally welcomed: while the poorest might express desires for an increased share of the benefits WVT provided, they expressed few signs of wanting to be 'empowered' in an individualistic sense. Behind their statements one could discern a desire for increased control over their lives, but this could equally be understood in terms of gaining increased access to patrons, as to becoming 'self-directing', 'self-sufficient' or 'autonomous'. Extrapolating, we might venture that both empowerment and development are interpreted locally in an idiom of clientelism, which sutures the divide between rich and poor. If so, this places local notions of development closer to particularistic, 'post-development', communitarian ideas than to the universalisms characteristic of liberal development discourse (Rahnema, 1992). WVT itself is not averse to speaking in this register (see below).

Evidence from Sanya suggests that the 'benefits' of World Vision's intervention were also locally inflected. In the case of the Sanya ADP on Kilimanjaro, part of the attraction of the ADP for the villagers was the prestige and status associated with the international NGO project. Such concerns form a central part of the wider socio-culturally constructed Chagga notion of *maendeleo* (development). Local understandings of *maendeleo* on Kilimanjaro have been historically concerned with the region's linkages to the outside world and its relative modernity compared to most rural areas (and probably some urban ones) in Tanzania. To be actively involved with a big development project instigated by a large international NGO which is helping to provide the community with better, more modern facilities (such as schools, health centres, and water projects) is an inherently 'good thing' according to the Chagga notion of *maendeleo*. Whether or not certain individuals or whole communities are empowered as a result of participation in this process is not an issue of major concern.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, *maendeleo* resembles more closely an earlier, 'technical fix/service provision' model of development. This model was initially pursued by WVT

in Kilimanjaro, although it has now been superseded, in theory if not unequivocally in practice, by an empowerment-based model.

## Conclusions: Who Wants to be Empowered?

In conclusion, we should state that the aim of this article has not been to provide prescriptions for the development community, since such prescriptions are not easily forthcoming. Its aim rather has been to describe the contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalences in the theory and practice of development as empowerment.

A major tension has been identified in World Vision's understanding of 'community empowerment'. It should be recognised first that the promotional literature of a large international NGO needs to be sufficiently vague that a variety of parties can read into it something of their own *weltanschauung*, and second, that in order to succeed even NGOs of an evangelical bent must evince some degree of pragmatism. Together these facts explain in part the puzzles of an NGO which claims to want to elevate the position of women and the poor, while at the same time channelling its interventions through established elites, and even regarding the strengthening of capable elites as an indicator of project success. At the same time it should be stressed that World Vision staff were intelligent people who genuinely wrestled with these issues. While they could not be credited (or discredited) with holding rigidly to notions of equality in income or power distribution, the results of this study were received with disquiet and prompted a memorandum to members of the Capacity Building Division regarding the importance of targeting more effectively the 'grassroots'.

The comparative lack of concern with formal equality in favour of a belief in the obligations of leaders to the less fortunate members of society has much in common with the idealisation of 'community' or 'moral economy' evident in certain 'post-development' writings. Indeed, a Chinese poem, which also opens a section of *The Post-Development Reader* (Rahnema and Bawtree, 1996) entitled 'Towards the Post-Development Age', adorned the wall of the Capacity Building Division. The poem reads: 'Go to the people. Live among them. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what you know. Build on what they have. But of the best leaders when their task is done, the people will remark: 'We have done it ourselves' (Ibid. p. 275). Unfortunately, the evidence presented here, in particular that from Moivaro, suggests that elites often fail in their responsibilities toward poorer groups, and may in fact use access to external resources to augment their exploitation of them. At the time of research WVT was pioneering a new methodology of 'Appreciative Inquiry' in certain villages, although it had yet to make an impact in Moivaro. Utilising metaphors of 'personal growth' and 'moving in the direction of light', Appreciative Inquiry was a participatory approach designed to build on self-identified community strengths. A methodology which elicits 'strengths' by means of 'participatory' appraisal, and which eschews any kind of language of structured power relations, runs an obvious risk of reproducing existing inequalities and perpetuating patterns of development which date from the colonial period if not earlier.

Another, perplexing contradiction, is that between empowerment as a state of being which is internally achieved and empowerment as something for which, at the very least, the *catalyst* lies without. Our review of the experience of the communities with which World Vision works suggests that the meaning of 'development' is still externally determined, and that the idea of 'development' as 'empowerment' is no different in this respect. In time target communities may partially internalise or appropriate such meanings, as Chagga have done with ideas of modernity, and to a

lesser degree, with *ujamaa* socialism, but a time-lag should be expected before the idea of empowerment, so fashionable in development circles, resounds within these communities.

World Vision's own solution appears to be to build more directly on the indigenous. Indeed, if Appreciative Inquiry is successful in promoting an improved ethic of responsibility on the part of leaders to lead, it might fit more perfectly with extant aspirations. Progressive thinkers, by contrast, face not just the practical difficulty of concretising the notions of abstract equality to which they aspire, but also the disturbing possibility that equality can only be instituted via insidious processes of heteronomous transformation.

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## Endnotes

1. Interview, World Vision Tanzania National Director, World Vision Head Office, Arusha, 1997.
2. Tanzania's local political and administrative structure runs from sub-village level, through ward, divisional, district and regional levels. Elected councils exist at village and district level. Previously the party-state hierarchy stretched down to roughly every ten houses. Since Tanzania's multi-party transition, the 'Ten Cell' is *de jure* an organ of the *party*, although its differentiation from the state is not always easily established on the ground.
3. Research by Tim Kelsall was carried out in Arusha between September 1996 and July 1997.
4. Research by Claire Mercer was carried out in Kilimanjaro between October 1996 and May 1997.
5. For example, the Moshono ADP Chairman was also the Village Chairman of Moshono village, having previously worked for the government in Tanga Region. The two female representatives interviewed were both members of the Village Government and leaders in UWT (*Umoja wa Wanawake wa Tanzania*, Union of Tanzanian Women). Another informant was a Village Chairman, sitting on the ADP because the elected representative was ill. One was a Village Executive Officer in a neighbouring village. The chairman of the ADP water committee was the district councillor for Moshono ward (who sat on the ADP *ex officio*), and another representative was a member of Village Government and elder in the Lutheran church.
6. Efficiency being measured in time not cost. Comparable data on the latter were unobtainable.
7. Kiswahili - common people, popular classes.
8. i.e. Claire Mercer.
9. Kyungukyelwa Church Community Development Project, the previous WVT project which has now expanded to become the Sanya ADP.
10. At the time of research Tsh 10,000 was equivalent to roughly \$15. In 1997 the real GDP per capita for Tanzania was \$580 (UNDP, 1999).
11. There were five wealth groups in total; one recipient could not be traced.
12. It is worth noting that the word 'empowerment' does not have a direct translation in either Kiswahili or Kichagga.

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