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Sustainable Development in Lesotho: Women's Organisations and Projects

by

Bantu Lulu Morolong

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

International/Intercultural Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1996

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P.O. Box 1572
Maseru, Lesotho
Southern Africa

Date 8 Dec 1995

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Sustainable Development in Lesotho: Women's Organisations and Projects* submitted by *Bantu Lulu Morolong* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy in International/Intercultural Education.*

Dr. M. Assheton-Smith, *Supervisor*

Dr. E. Murray, *Committee Member*

Dr. S. H. Toh, *Committee Member*

Dr. D. S. Gill, *Committee Member*

Dr. P. Wilson, *Committee Member*

Dr. R. Ghosh, *External Examiner*

Date: November 20, 1995

To My Late Parents

Gasegale MmaLobone and Israel Baedigile Itumeleng,
who laid for me a solid foundation for the value
of perseverance, and whose nurturing love
continues to guide every aspect of my life.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate a linkage between the lack of sustainability in rural Basotho Women's collective development initiatives and the type of organizational styles used to manage the initiatives. Four women's projects aimed at addressing women's socioeconomic needs were studied, using a multisite case study approach within qualitative research methods. Data were collected through focus group interviews, individual interviews, and participant observation. Written documents and informal discussions were used to provide supplementary data. In all the interviews, open-ended questions were used to elicit qualitative data on the participants' perceptions, views, opinions, understandings, experiences, and impressions of issues pertinent to the research question.

It is evident from the data that the institutions that play a major role in the planning of the projects advocate modern project-management styles. These are characterised, among other factors, by formalised education and training, written constitutions and laws, legalised status of projects, and overall attempts at bureaucratisation of the organisational structures employed. Such advocacy evidently undermines the existing organisational styles that are characterised by informal knowledge-acquisition styles, the maintenance of order through an internalised sanctioning system, and an overall culture of oralcy in communication.

The advocates of the new styles assume that in the process of learning them, the old ones are replaced. There is evidence to suggest to the contrary. Especially in the areas of education, human and material resources management, leadership, and conflict resolution, the women in the projects studied have continued to use the two styles alongside each other. The study also showed that attempts to reconcile the two systems have been made especially difficult by the inflexible centralised institutional structures that have not kept pace with the practical developments in the socioeconomic and cultural setting.

These findings highlight limitations in the capacities of the state structures of Lesotho to enhance sustainable development. Women in the studied projects do not seem to have the power to enhance structural transformation by independently defining their needs and goals, and the strategies they wish to employ in pursuing these goals. Such lack of independence is especially evident in the areas of financial and human resource management in the family and household which extends to the projects. The situation of persistent role conflicts and the way that it impacts on women's efforts to manage development efficiently is accentuated by a rural development policy that lacks gender responsiveness.

Rural development policy in Lesotho does not recognise and acknowledge the gendered demands of development management. However, women's courage to venture into the various development projects is evidence that they have the capacity to initiate, pursue, and manage development within a context full of stress and contradictions. This courage needs to be backed by a policy that not only sets sustainable development as a goal, but also has as its major feature practical empowerment mechanisms for women. This need holds because in fact the rural sector in Lesotho is in the hands of women; women constitute the majority and yet suffer from the effects of poverty more than men do.

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List of Acronyms

ADF	African Development Foundation
BCP	Basotholand Congress Party
BNP	Basotho National Party
BEDCO	Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DVV	Deutschen Volkshochschul - Verbandes (Adult Education Association - Germany)
FTC	Farmers' Training Centre
IEMS	Institute of Extra Mural Studies
ISAS	Institute of Southern African Studies
LADB	Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank
LANFE	Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education
LCCUL	Lesotho Cooperative Credit Union League
LDTC	Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre
LNDP	Lesotho National Development Plan
NUL	National University of Lesotho
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACU	South African Customs Union
USCC	Unitarian Service Committee of Canada
VDC	Village Development Council
WCARRD	World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
WLSA	Women in Law in Southern Africa

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is the single most critical problem facing many parts of the world today (Clark, 1991). It is endemic in the rural areas and its consequences are just as devastating and long lasting as they are in the urban centres. But, because rural poverty is usually dispersed, and as such quite decentralised, less visible, and seemingly less violent than its urban counterpart, it rarely gains sustained public attention. The literature which elaborates who participates in rural poverty alleviation in most parts of the developing world acknowledges the dominant role of women in this regard.

In the case of Lesotho, the role of women in poverty alleviation and development (especially through projects) has not been adequately mapped. This means that the overall intricacies of the potential of these small units of social organization to make a difference in the development scene have not as yet been addressed. And yet the power of solidarity as a strategy adopted by women in dealing with poverty cannot be denied (Barke & O'Hare, 1984, p. 60).

Communal organisation is a common feature of life, especially in Africa. Scanty evidence in the case of Lesotho shows that women have banded together to work in agricultural production since precolonial Lesotho (Eldredge, 1991). Even though such forms of social organisation are on the decline, it can be argued that they have their strengths. In spite of their experiences of the processes of change as Lesotho goes through a period of transition in economic and sociopolitical terms, Basotho women have continued collectively to play an active role in the battles against poverty (Boserup, 1970; Charlton, 1984; Clark, 1991; Joekes, 1987; Tinker, 1990). They have done so especially through participation in development projects of numerous kinds. However, indications of the high rate of failure of these types of projects continue (Ferguson, 1990; Green, 1990; Mokhothu & Gay, 1991; cited in Sechaba Consultants, 1995). Interesting too is that, among those who are poor and powerless, women in rural areas are still at the bottom of the pyramid (Bryant & White, 1982, p. 215).

Of special interest in this dissertation is the project approach to rural development. Projects as conceived in this context are as a rule linked to a particular national ministry or nongovernmental organisation and are often supported by an external funding agency (Berstecher, 1985, p. 28). The main units of analysis in this study were projects; specifically, projects meant to meet problems of rural poverty—poverty, in the economic

sense, whose effects are suffered by women and children more than by men (World Bank, 1992). These are projects that emphasize increased production, seek to introduce alternative sources of income, increase self-employment, and are, on the whole, profit driven. These projects are often implemented through modern forms of social organisation, with education and training, capital investment, and formal institutional structures playing a major role. In a study of World Bank projects, it was found that there were almost no instances where projects were designed to work with traditional groups in communities (World Bank, 1975). This is reflective of the modernisation strategies which marginalise the old systems of knowledge and infringe on the rights of locals to take the lead against the indifference to pluralism, which is characteristic of all societies. This process of modernisation has, as such, continued to perpetuate development as a high order complex political business monopolised by the State (Uchendu, 1980, p. 80), in partnership with the large-scale international development agencies.

Thematic in this research was the fact that women's organisations, unlike their antithesis, large-scale growth-oriented development agencies, have a broad-based conception of poverty and development (Heredia, 1988, p. 18). Advocated is a rural development process based on the interdependence of all social institutions without any authoritarian relationship. Although the approach adopted here recognises the centrality of the State in development issues, it also gives credit to traditional society (Barke & O'Hare, 1984, p. 59). It stresses the importance of the consolidation of communities and social groups that have a capacity to pursue self-reliant development; their ideas and experiences that are culturally founded are critical for sustainable development. This dissertation is supportive of development which centres around local initiatives and forms of organization as opposed to total reliance on pyramidal state structures. The view adopted here is that women's organisations are corporate micro-scale democracies that can play an important role in development. The assumption is that if the macro structures take into account the nature of the micro units, they can together form a viable development force. These groups' long history of involvement (Bunch & Carillo, 1990; Heredia, 1988; Kandiyoti, 1990; Leonard, 1989; Masi, 1981; Neef, 1981; Staudt & Parpart, 1989) in projects that are geared to poverty alleviation is proof that they have a capacity to form a comprehensive and lasting structure (Masi, 1981, p. 12).

there is also a saying that "Monyala ka peli o nyala oa hae"/so the bridegrooms family's conscience would bother them until they had paid all the "bohali." If not, then when next time it is us marrying their daughter, we will also drag our feet.

Despite all the objective restraints as stipulated by the cooperative laws, to these actors the transactions were perceived as infinite. In the researcher's understanding of symbolic interactionism, infinite transactions form a basis for the emergence of society (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984), a society which in this case is the one in which the project members have been socialised and whose norms have also been institutionalised and internalised by the members. As they said, they have no wish to deviate from these norms on the basis of a single project experience. Therefore, they use what works and will continue to do so.

Because of how they had just described the way that loans were administered in the past, they were asked why they were worried about the slow rates of loan repayment now. One participant explained, using the following analogy:

When we talk about funding agencies we are talking about farmers, farmers who sow seeds and would always want to check if these seeds have grown into plants. The most important factor here is trustworthiness of the members, because if not, then the funds will not be used efficiently. So the most important thing is trustworthiness so that we can be proud to the funding agency. Otherwise, as Basotho we will have a bad reputation. We do not want to embarrass ourselves in the eyes of foreigners, as I think we would be with USCC.

Incidentally, this seemed to imply that most of these "farmers," unlike the neighbours, were not there to stay, so they would like to see the plants rather urgently; and that it is not as bad to embarrass oneself among neighbours and relatives as among foreigners. Whether dealing with foreigners in this way is perceived positively or negatively would be an interesting research question.

Of concern to the participants too was the way the funds were disbursed from the outset. It was signed for on their behalf by a representative of the funding body or the Ministry of Agriculture and deposited in the bank for them. As a result, they did not seem quite clear even then whether it came in as dollars and was converted to R45,000, or if the original amount was in dollars. The latter case would mean that they should have received double the figure they were given. Asked why they did not follow up on this issue to ensure that they had the facts, they all agreed:

How could we? Discuss it with who? "Ka sesotho mpho ha e phetloe meno"/You do not look a gift horse in the mouth. If they had helped us, what else could we say? This is the way it happened, really. If you help us, then

you say to us, I asked for money on your behalf; then you bring the money to us. It would be very ungrateful of us to go back to you and say, "I think I have some questions about this gift; can you compute the figures for me?" No, we would not. We were glad to have the money, even though we still have these questions at the back of our minds.

The decisions about following up on the exact figures for the grant were obviously made on the basis of a culturally anchored system of dealing with a gift, perhaps to the disadvantage of the project. Further, the participants said that, even in the project itself, the money was not handled properly. A great deal of it went unrecorded, and one said,

I really got to understand the magnitude of the problem when the auditors worked on our books and exposed to us how much money was unaccounted for. So some of the carelessness about the funds emanated from the group itself. For example, even in the committee, at one point some loans were given just between the treasurer and the individual borrowers, which was a big mistake that we had to deal with quite urgently. We elected a new committee after that.

Electing a new committee from the same group of people who shared similar perceptions and experiences about the administration of a loan in this context does not seem to have solved the problem permanently.

Conflict Resolution

One of the areas that bears great importance in the field of human-resources management is conflict and its resolution. Sociologically, within the structural functionalist tradition, conflict is characteristic of society. The conflict model would be applicable in this case because intergroup tensions arose from different degrees of access to resources, as has been alluded to earlier. According to conflict theorists, this is a dynamic process. In the context of this case, of special interest is the way that attempts to resolve the conflict were articulated by the focus-group participants.

The executive committee in this project had legitimate power and control over the bulk of the project resources. On the basis of their established value system, they allocated resources in the way it was described. The participants' comments show both satisfaction and dissatisfaction about the way this was done and how it resulted in conflictual situations when they said that the committee allowed people to borrow unreasonably. In their view, this resulted in members' not being able to repay, and the other members' chances to borrow were narrowed in the long run.

Beyond this, still focused on the committee as the key body in the project, the members described a conflict situation that had stemmed from the previous committee's having stayed too long in their positions; that is, a new election was long overdue, and the group members took it upon themselves to remove them unanimously at an annual general meeting. For once, according to the participants, the project members had demonstrated their capability to take control and to show that they knew their rights in the project. Conflict that related to the general membership was articulated in this way. The participants said that they understood that when they worked together as in this project, they were bound to disagree or clash over some issues. However, they said that problems arise when a conflict is unresolved. They felt that one of the major causes of such conflicts was that people were lazy; the conflicts really had little to do with any major disagreement. For those who might have had complaints about certain issues, they kept their complaints to themselves, but they would then discuss them outside the project. These were some of the problems that were really pertinent, in the members' opinions.

Asked to explain why people were not open with each other, they expressed the view that perhaps it had a great deal to do with differences in individual personalities. Some members were quite frank, but there were those who harboured grudges. *"Perhaps this is because they do not quite know their rights. They do not know that we are all the same in the project/"Re a lekanang ka mokhatlong." As long as we leave room for respect, by age, then we are all the same."*

One member of the group thought, however, that

> *there might be reasons for people to decide not to talk about their problems; you know, expose their complaints. It could be that they think about the possible reactions of those responsible for their complaints. So they think about this before and decide to avoid confrontational situations. "Ka nako e ngoe batho ha ba rate lerata." Sometimes it is just that people do not like to start trouble, so they would rather keep quiet.*

The general opinion was strong that, typically, people would rather keep quiet to avoid conflict. A similar view was expressed by the focus group for the chicken-rearing project, who said that they would not tell if they saw someone take something from another house. However, a few members insisted that

> *to discuss issues openly would solve a lot of our problems, once and for all. And I believe if we do not, then we are usually encouraging an even worse situation to arise because the unhappy party might get wrong advice from people who might not even understand the situation, and they would be further angered. This is the way I have seen it happen.*

One member carried the discussion further to illustrate her point that people have reasons not to voice their complaints:

> *I can remember instances where people have kept quiet about an issue. When another person brought it up and a conflict situation resulted, they would say, "Yes, this is exactly why I have kept quiet about it." And this is the case not only here in the project; it is a nationwide disease/"Ke kobo anela."*

An elderly member of the group expressed another view:

> *It is a new thing/"ke semanje-manje sena sa lona." It is your modernity. Yes, Basotho were always preoccupied with peace. They would say, "Ke a itsabela." And yet they also had sayings such as "Moea khotla ha a tsekisoe" or "moro khotla ha a okoloe mafura." That is, in a public meeting people are free to express their views so as to straighten public issues out. This is why I am saying, really, it is a new thing. It is a new type of Sesotho. Traditionally, even in Church we said "Letlaila le tlailela Morena"/He who sings bad can do so freely; God listens to all of us in our many different voices. In the families too it was the same thing: It would only be a problem if people started insulting others.*

In commenting on this "new type of Sesotho" and what its causes might be, this member expressed his opinion that

> *it is directly related to our political history. We had a state of emergency for a very long time, remember? And at that time people were careful of what they could say and to whom. Even on very small issues people used to get harassed. Everything that people said that was critical or questioning things, it could be construed for the questioning of the powers that be/"Ba boholong."*

This was an experience to which most members could relate, even though the members who felt that such should not be the case, at least not in the project, insisted that

> *here in the project there is really nothing I cannot talk about; I mean, complain about. And for others who would keep quiet, I mean those who find it difficult to even cast their votes, then I would say those are the people who kill projects. These are people who lack honesty. They are unwanted elements who hide truths. And to me, really, politics or not politics, it is the question of individual personalities.*

Individual personalities accounted for some of the members' actions and different views on issues. These differences were mentioned in the case on chicken rearing. Beyond these, a slightly different but related observation by another participant was that, in her experience,

you know, my dear, really, the issue is, before you confront a person these days you look at how they are to you, "hore na u mo tloaetse ha kae"/what type of personal relationship you have with this person. You ask yourself about "melemo le lithuso tse uka li fumanang ho eena, o ipotsa le hore na ke motho oa maemo afeng"/the personal benefits that you received or can receive from them, and also about their social status. At the time of conflict a lot of people might be against her. But you, as somebody you know closely, you ask yourself, How will it be to her, for me to be seen to be one of her critics?" On your own you resolve that this inner conflict had better stay hidden inside than to betray the trust of somebody close to you.

It was quite apparent at this point of the discussions in the focus group that problems of managing the project and making its implementation a smooth process were multifaceted. Key among these, in the participants' view, was the issue of differences in social status among the project members and how this impinged upon human-resources management and conflict resolution. The last person who commented made a specific mention of "these days," implying that issues of social status were more apparent then than they used to be. This observation was supported by one participant's lengthy statement on status:

The fact that we have so many problems in this project and in other groups in general is quite linked to the way in which we are now preoccupied with people's status. "Ho shebuoe maemo"/We no longer look at personal qualities and strengths. "Motho ha a fokotse, ele motintinyanenyana" [a very emphatic diminutive for a weak person in terms of social status] /if she brings up an idea, even if that idea sounds quite strong, we will first judge her idea on the basis of who she is. We might even make it difficult for her voice to be heard/"Ho seke ha ba ha utloahala letho le tsoang molomong oa hae." This is the way it is, really. And on top of that, "lerato le filile bathong"/there is no longer love among people. We really do not know what has happened. When a person has status, and a lot of it, it is quite difficult for us to show them their mistakes, because we know we will need things from them, money, food, matches, transport, etc.

But the participant who felt strongly against the situation as described above further advanced her theory:

But for an honest person, really, this should not be the case. We should be able to separate what goes on in the project with our lives outside the project. Other people are straight/"Motho e mong o feea." Some people are straight in their dealings with others. And believe it or not, such a person is incapable of harbouring grudges. A person who harbours grudges is quite capable of sowing seeds of confusion in groups by operating from outside the group, gossiping about issues that should be discussed frankly. But I guess "ke popo ka mokhoa o eleng ka teng"/it is God's creation as it is, and I think we have to deal with it with that understanding.

This indicates that to these people, in reality there is a fine line between honesty and practicality. Evidently, some people would rather respond by keeping the complaint

to themselves rather than face a situation of confrontation or of betraying the trust of others to whom they owe some allegiance. Delving into the area of how these problems could be addressed so that they do not impact negatively on project performance, one view was that

> *there is a way in which we can approach these sensitive issues and people. In spite of what the cooperative laws say, we know that people are different, so we need different methods and approaches for different people/"mekhoa ea katamelo e keke ea tsoana." Also, we know that people react differently to different people. We have strategies of easing off people's anxieties, and we have used them quite successfully in the past. Perhaps those are some of the things that have kept this group going. It is the same kind of thing that you find in the family. If as a woman you do not know your rights and you are also not committed to your family as yours, then any time you are angered you would pick up your stuff and leave. Yes, we have seen these things happen, have we not? And the same things happen in this project, which is a shame.*

In another participants view,

> *A person who does that is the one who does not understand the Sesotho saying that "Ntoa ke ea malula moho"/Those who live together are bound to fight and disagree on issues," or the one that says, "E khoptjoa ele maoto mane"/Even a horse with its four legs does stumble, so what more of a person with just her two legs? So to err is human. These really are the bases of our social relations, not only in this project, but even in our daily lives, in the families and in the communities. And these are our guiding principles in approaching any conflict situation.*

Asked to elaborate on any other factors that might be taken into account when they resolved conflicts in the group, in addition to those already mentioned, the participants felt that,

> *despite the fact that the cooperative law says we are all the same in the group in terms of rights and responsibilities, we still try to preserve "boleng ba rona"/our time-tested ways. And of these, the most important is respect. We as Basotho, we know that people are not the same, and they cannot be the same. Even the fingers of your hand are not the same, and that is the way we are. So we respect each other according to a lot of factors. The most important of these is age [others mentioned were social status and economic background]. These others [i.e socioeconomic status] we try not to think about too much, at least not in the group. So if you are making your point, with due respect, no unpleasant utterances, using the proper way of addressing elders, then you can say anything/"Ha o sa bue mantsoe a hlohlontsang litsebe"; people will listen. For example, our male member here can tell you, we have had heated debates over issues. But the most important thing is respect, really.*

One view on an additional factor that was taken into account was that they approached conflict with a great degree of patience and tolerance: *"Mamello le boipanyo*

ke ntho tse kholo.' For example, they said, *"Even with people that we know are very short tempered, we do all we can to make sure that that side of their personalities is not exposed."* It is clear that there was no stipulation of time limit on how long the patience would last. Concern was mainly about not hurting each other in the process.

The male member supported these observations:

> *Yes, really, according to the project laws we are all equal. But of course, like she said, we still also stick to the known boundaries/"Re tseba meeli." As long as we do not say things or use words that are disturbing to others, then all is well. I am a man, but that is not an issue as long as we choose our words carefully.*

Beyond project implementation, the focus-group participants' discussions focused on areas that bore relevance to where their project was at the time in terms of performance. Attempts have been made in the presentation to classify views and perceptions as they arose from the data into the following broad categories: change, resource management, voluntarism, education and training, and use or application of indigenous knowledge forms. Although some of these were appraised as positive factors in the project, some were raised as problematic issues that still need to be resolved within the context of this project or in general.

Perceptions of Training

In this case, training seems to have been important, according to the discussions. It was comprised of short courses, workshops, and conferences offered both at the project site and away at training institutions and other places in the district. Though the participants did not provide full details of the content of the training programmes, they described the training in general:

> *It was very broad, I must say. Really, I think it just depends on individuals, because in fact we are all very different. God has created us very differently, so our perceptions of the training are bound to differ, but it definitely opened our eyes. In fact, in the whole of this district, I can say with confidence that, amongst all the groups, all types of cooperatives, I mean, it is a well-known fact that we have been fully baked/"Re botsoitse." On all aspects of cooperative management, we are fully equipped. The cooperative league gave us full knowledge before they could have us registered. And they were happy that we fully understood the laws and bylaws.*

Asked to comment on the other aspects of the content of their training apart from cooperative principles, the participants mentioned that they had also learnt a great deal about leadership, with the executive committee receiving special attention as the key body

in the project, because it was the committee that would carry out or implement most of the decisions and wishes of the group.

Regarding the knowledge received in the training programmes, the emphasis was on the fact that it was knowledge that fitted reasonably well with some knowledge forms that they already had. One of them expressed that,

> *in my view, most of the knowledge that we were being given was the type that really sharpened our existing knowledge. For example, the concept of revolving fund: We had a similar thing in this village. People were buying each other household utensils on a rotational basis. So, really, the idea of cooperating to solve a problem was not a new one. We had done things together before, even if it had been in a small scale, but to me the basic principles are the same.*

Another participated supported this view but observed a slight difference between what they were doing then and what they had done in the past:

> *The only difference has been that, through this present type of cooperation, we have been able to achieve results that are quite significant. For example, we have been able to secure a site from the chief; a very big site at that. We have grown trees on it, we have built an office, and we have other big plans in the pipeline.*

The emphasis was on collective work only, the size of the project, and its achievements, and not so much on the organisation styles as they related to group performance. To another member, the cooperation in their project activity was similar to that in the work parties—*matsema*—among the Basotho in the past:

> *The only difference is that in this new type of cooperative people come together voluntarily on the basis of love, not expecting anything in return. But in the past, "ene e ka khona mong a mosebetsi a fane ka tee kapa motoho"/the person for whom the job was to be done was expected to provide tea [an expression for a type of beverage or different kinds of food]. Yet here we work with such commitment. Even those who come back from the fields come to work if they need to.*

The focus of this participant was clearly on the worksite in both types of cooperation and not necessarily on the long-term benefits. However, according to another view, there was a big difference, because in the present type of cooperation, they sat together and planned what they wanted to do for the good of everyone. In the old form, however, one individual would be forced by her individual problem, such as being unable to finish weeding her field on her own, to decide on her own to organise a work party, at the end of which each person would go her different way.

The apparent emphasis on the individuals' responsibility to organise versus that of several people working together to organise their labour, roles, and so on before the tasks were performed sheds light on the major differences between the two models of cooperation. It also set the basis for subsequent concern about collective ownership and control of project resources.

Returning to training in general, it was also mentioned by one member that,

> *as my colleague here has said, the courses that we got have really helped us. Even in our village-based types of income-generating activities such as funeral societies/"Bo mpate shilling," most fortunately all of them that have our members work properly. People apply their knowledge and experiences from this project to minimise the chances of those other groups collapsing, which is a very important thing.*

To describe their experiences of working within a system that seemingly drew on old and new ways of doing things, the participants moved beyond just stating how they cope to describing their perceptions and experiences of change as follows:

> *We are aware that times have changed, and so are the systems. So for us to work properly, we just have to work within these systems. Each part has its role, sometimes within an umbrella body that has been designated from above. For example, look at the way the Village Development Councils work with the chieftaincy. If people have been trained in the way these systems work, then there is no problem. It is really like a person's body: The ears, eyes, and hands all work together for the good of the body. This is why I would say, with the old and new forms of cooperation, the new is an improved version of the old because to cooperate in solving a collective problem, you are really helping the individuals to develop skills to be able to solve their problems on their own.*

In one participant's view, in the past perhaps there were not so many parts of the system, and even the way that they did things was much simpler. For example,

> *the way we raised chickens, the Sesotho way, you know, one just kept a mixed breed of chickens, no housing the way we see it now in complex structures, no sophisticated feeding procedures, etc. Everything was done in a very simple way. Farm management in general was quite simple. But as it is now, even the land does not give us as much as it used to/"Naha e feletsoe ke matla." This is why we need advice from the extension people on how to improve our yields.*

In support of this view of change, another member observed that,

> *in fact, in the past the most part of our lives was attached to the soil, to the environment. There was no preoccupation with money, . . . the type that you see now. So if the soil was good, life too was good/"Ha naha ene e phethahetse bophelo le bona bone bo phe-thahetse." But now that the soil is no longer efficient, people depend on raising money for their existence.*

whereas in the past people depended very much on their natural ence/"Likelello tsa bona tsa hlaho." They did not have anywhere else they could get additional ideas from/"Ho ne ho sena mo ba khang

to elaborate on their conceptions of education, it became apparent that the were referring to all types of learning. Although experiential learning was also believed that school education was probably more important (i.e., it obsolete), because education or knowledge from school "does not rot." As said,

in do things on the basis of your life experiences, you know, things you earnt through living and doing, but then later in life discover that the ou were doing them all along was wrong. For example, in our knitting wing sector, we still knit and sew. Our children do wear those items. vith new knowledge we have discovered that without proper rements it shows on the garment that you did not measure properly, so roduct does not come out as a good product. What we are saying, is that schooling and these courses that we take build on people's l intelligence, and this type of knowledge you do not need only when e a learner, but even when you are a consumer. Right now, with the edge that I have, I would not buy a dress with unequal sleeves, because be aware that it was not sewn properly. In my opinion, too, the tant thing is to be able to apply what you have learnt.

ssing the methods of delivering the new knowledge, the participants hat it makes a great difference if you are made aware that the way in which een doing things was not right, but without being pressured into changing. *lea is introduced and explained with examples, then we are happy. It really eat difference the way you are told and being given a chance to assess and you have been wrong."* Seeing for yourself is usually very important, o this statement.

s of Problems

ldition to what were considered possible contributory factors to a lack of e of the project or possible courses for its failure (such as conflict), the s discussed broad issues as problems in the group. Of great prominence problems were the issues of voluntarism and the lack of self-confidence in e members. Specific mention was also made of the delay in services reaching

the people. In one member's view, their project was delayed in reaching its goals because there was a delay in the services reaching them: *"Litsebeletso li lieha ho fihla ho rona sechaba."* The example given was that they had long wanted to have a slaughterhouse for their chickens, but until then it did not seem to be forthcoming. If the project did not reach its goals, that is, to generate employment and income, then it meant that the people were expected to work and to volunteer their services without any returns. This idea was articulated as follows:

> *In my opinion, the big issue, the real big issue, is benefits/profits/returns/ "litsiane." Our people still do not understand how this works. If a person joins a group such as this one, after a few months they expect to get something to share with their families. They expect this too soon. But the fact of the matter is, we will only make profits if we are really working hard. In essence, these projects are supposed to be businesses. People still do not understand this. The lack of returns discourages them, and they leave the group. This would not be a problem if these projects had enough capital so that people feel that they are benefitting.*

In another participant's view, a related issue which was just as problematic was greed and self-centredness/ *"Boikhabo le Meharo."* For example,

> *people struggle over status and power for themselves. In any case, we cannot all of us be in the committee. And for some of us, if they do not get elected, they feel useless and leave, instead of staying to support those who have been elected. Also people have low self-esteem. If they have ideas that might be good, they do not voice them. And eventually they feel useless in the group/"ho ipebola ka mantsoe a mang," not understanding that each member's input is just as important as any other.*

To others, though, it all had to do with status and people's lack of commitment; for example, lack of participation in project meetings and activities. Additionally, they pointed out that

> *there are people who think they know more than others. So when she gets into the group and she is not treated as such and we perhaps pick one person over her, she gets angry and starts thinking or even saying that she is not liked/"Re a mo nena." She may even go to the extent of comparing her status with that of the elected person and start saying, "Manyeo ka eng ea hae?"/What does she have that I do not have?*

Therefore, the participants argued that the following were reasons for this attitude:

> *We end up electing people into, for example, the management of the group, not necessarily because of any specifically stronger leadership qualities. Instead, we elect them according to how much social status they command. But a rich person is not necessarily a good manager, is she? She may be, of course, but not always. So these are the people that will fail the projects. And usually these people are the lazy ones, but the most talkative. They are not lazy at the mouth.*

Another interesting issue relating to voluntarism in these projects was raised and discussed quite extensively:

> *Now, let's take a person who says, "I went to BEDCO [a business-skills training centre] and paid for my training on a certain skill," let's say sewing. Now, does it make sense for this person to come into the group and voluntarily, without pay, teach others how to sew? To me this does not make sense.*

A response to this was that

> *I can also say I share your concern. But at the same time, I don't think we would expect her to give us all the details of her skills; she can just introduce us. And anybody who wants more can go into an arrangement for an in-depth training program and pay for it.*

In agreement, the other participant said,

> *Yes, I do understand, but what I really wanted to highlight was what happens when we enter the world of money. Her advanced training from BEDCO would ideally mean better prospects for making money; she has spent money, and she needs to make money. And, really, how realistic is it for her to be expected to volunteer sharing her skills just like that without getting back her money somehow?*

Incidentally, these are the contradictions that exist in the women's struggles to organise collectively to meet their goals through the project. Another argument is that people did not want to volunteer to train others because they lacked self-confidence, perhaps because their knowledge from BEDCO was not complete. If it had been, she would have been in a position to know that, in a one-week course, people could not learn what she had learnt in three months (the minimum length of training at BEDCO for a course such as sewing). The participants were asked to discuss further the idea of the lack of self-confidence or low self-esteem that had come up quite frequently in the discussions; opinion was strong that

> *people may not have confidence in themselves because of inferiority complex. It is a disease that our people have. Right here in our project it exists. Even amongst the committee members, if these people from outside come and would like us to express our needs, people just do not talk. Even in parliament we see it.*

The general view is that these are the people that cannot be trusted. *"If they do not trust themselves and their abilities, how can you trust them?"* Presumably, this means either that they have forgotten their purpose in the group or that they lack commitment. The main idea was that self-confidence and a realistic perception of one's capabilities should have been the driving forces in the groups. The interesting question is, what

happened to their self-esteem? In discussing such a delicate and abstract issue, it was difficult to be specific and to understand the point of view of people who were said to lack self-esteem, because it was discussed in general terms. Low self-esteem has featured significantly in discussions of gender subordination; therefore, when the participants were asked to discuss lack of self-confidence or low self-esteem in relation to gender, one view was that people in general were too preoccupied to do or say the right thing. Two or three people strongly believed that this was really common amongst women; however, their colleagues, including the only male participant, said,

> *This also happens amongst men. I think it is a common problem/"Ke bona eka ke kobo anela." Even at "khotla" we find situations where some people are completely quiet. "Ba thotse tu!" You find that sometimes it will even be a woman who stands up and says something.*

Implied in the last statement is that, culturally, it is more acceptable for a woman to stay quiet, and if *even a woman* has something to say when men are quiet, then there must be something wrong with the men present.

One participant defended the frequency of low self-esteem among women (which involved the performance of these types of projects, in this participant's view):

> *We grew under a great degree of oppression with men always at the top for a long time/"Re hotse tlasa khatello e kholo, ka nako e telele." We were not quite aware that men are basically quite weak/"banna ba a fokola." But for a long time, if and when he said something, you had to agree. If you did not [this is presumably in a family setting], the first thing he would say would be, "This is my house. . . . I am the man here," and that was the end of the discussion. The same was the case with chiefs. So we still live under this, even though women have started to realise the clumsiness with which men handle issues sometimes/"botlaila bo bongata ho bo ntate."*

Although there was no disagreement with this critical and perceptive description of a patriarchal system and its manifestations, especially in the family, the views were quite divided on the extent to which the oppression prevailed in this context. Some members thought that the oppression was completely "weeded out"/*"Re e hlaotse ho tu!"* whereas others thought that they still had a long way to go. One view that summed up this part of the discussions was that if a man or a woman thought quite carefully about what she or he wanted to say and was convinced that it was constructive within a project such as this, then he or she would not have any problem expressing it. If people know their strengths, then they will never be afraid. This participant obviously assumed that this person would not lack the self-confidence that was raised earlier in the discussion. One member also wanted to impress upon the women that it was important to have confidence in each other, that if they continued to capitalise on each other's weaknesses,

then their collective strength would always be in jeopardy, *"and everything we do together will never be taken seriously. Perhaps this is not even just a women's problem, but people's problem in general."* A general problem or not, it would be interesting to find out why women lack confidence in each other and exploit each other's weaknesses.

In shifting the discussions to focus on the present status of the project, one member attributed the sustenance of the group to the fact that they had one elderly male member who has stayed with the group since its inception. In her view, if they had been on their own as women, they would have fought and disintegrated. This demonstrated the lack of confidence in each other that one member had just observed. Stereotypical as this perception may sound, it probably had a basis for this member, who obviously saw the male member as an overseer or a control mechanism. She said that he provided guidance through principles such as *"Do not exchange words unnecessarily. Let us have less talk, hear more, answer little, and keep working."* Such philosophical thinking might also have had a basis. Whether it was because he was a man or because he was an older person who brought into the project his life experiences would be interesting to discover. That these proved useful principles was not debatable from the point of view of the participants in the discussion.

Asked to comment on the impact of the project for the participants, the focus-group members said that it would have been difficult to speak on behalf of everybody because it must have affected individuals differently for various reasons. They expressed a shared view, however, that the project so far had had a positive impact on them. Among the things they mentioned were gains in knowledge and skills, changes in attitudes, and, of course, the material benefits.

> *I have learnt a lot about the management or leadership in projects such as this. But in addition to that I have learnt a great degree of independence. I was the type of person who would sit at home with a problem, "Ke sa tsebe hore ke nka eng ke e lekanya le eng"/not really knowing what to do next. But right now, "Ke lla se mothamo." I might be having problems, but I know what to do to deal with my problems [literally translated, I am crying with a mouthful, which is supposedly much better than crying with an empty stomach]. I know where to go, what to do, and how. Above all these, I have also learnt how to mix with other people/"Ke tseba ho kopana le lichaba tse ling." For example, right now I have been chosen to go and represent women's projects in this district at a workshop by the Ministry of Agriculture. Really, this project has taught me that life is all about work. Even when I feel sick I bear the pain and keep going/"Ke seke ka ba mosali ea ntse a pitika."*

The other members felt that this summed up how they too have benefitted from the project, but they added that the benefits have also extended to the rest of their

community. They gave examples of other development programmes that had come into their village because of their popularity in terms of strength in development issues. Of these, they specifically cited a large-scale educational programme by World Vision[5] which has helped finance primary education (seven years of schooling) for children from about 200 families. They also said that the skills that they have acquired from this project they use in their homes and in other projects in the village where they are members, and that for this they are thankful to all who supported and nurtured their efforts in many different ways.

Preliminary Case Analysis

This group was initiated independently by its members with subsequent assistance from various government and private agencies. It is evident that such external intervention came quite early in the life of the project. The central idea of forming this group was a response by a number of women to a pressing need. The response evidently was anchored on one of the fundamental principles of dealing with crises in this society: *"M'angoana ke ena ea tsoarang thipa ka bohaleng*/A woman or a mother, more than anybody else, is sure to take a bold step to respond to a bad situation, especially where her children are concerned."

Even after assistance had been offered, the members stayed involved in the making, follow-up, and implementation of decisions. This was perhaps one of the things that enabled them to learn to a great extent about the system, its parts, and how they operated together. Some members thought that the assistance fund came rather prematurely. However, by the time it was received, they were reasonably prepared through a series of courses on their expressed needs. If this training had not been useful, they probably would not have been able to administer the fund independently. This task involved a great deal of decision making, such as deciding when to use the funds, how much to give to whom, when, and for what types of activities. It also involved deciding when it was necessary to seek advice.

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[5]World Vision is an American and Canadian church-based humanitarian and development aid agency which has engaged in development activities in Lesotho for some time now, with an educational focus in this part of the country. In other parts of the world, its areas of emphasis include development aid to social groups vulnerable to disease, effects of war, migration, malnutrition, urbanisation, and natural disasters such as floods and drought, as well as adverse effects of social injustice.

Ongoing discussion was evidently a major part of the overall project-implementation process in this group. Amongst others, the members discussed the activities that they wanted to be components of their project; their desired ultimate status, which was to be a registered cooperative; and their needs for training. These discussions were occurring both internally and with the external agencies as more and more of them became involved in the group's training and registration, as facilitators of the group's participation in events such as national agricultural shows, and in auditing their books.

This interaction presumably gave the members of this group reasonable exposure to and most likely broadened their outlook on development processes. This was possibly the reason that they are able to compare themselves with other groups and to rate themselves, confidently, "well baked." Their formal registration as a legal entity impacted positively on their self-image in relation to the other parts of the system. There was further evidence to suggest that such "baking" built certain levels of confidence in the members of this group and helped them to develop a positive attitude to change. For example, the fact that they had to keep written records, which was evidently a new practice, was seen as an indicator of their exposure to change, but opinions differed: Some members still felt that it was not important because it might have tampered with the trustworthiness that the Basotho used to have. However, on the whole the practice of writing things down was appraised positively because, on the basis of experiences, human error was always possible. It became apparent that record keeping was not only upheld, but also adapted (when one member said that, after all, it did not mean that they were writing all the time), because it was only to make an outline of the major facts and ideas. Such adaptation was also evident in their preparedness and expressed determination to continue to use oral communication simultaneously with the written word because of the limited communication services which then made it impossible for them to depend entirely on writing. They added that, even if writing were to have been totally adopted, it would still not make a big difference because the letters were still sent through people most of the time. There is no postal service, and the people carrying the letters could forget to send the letters.

The participants expressed dissatisfaction with the evident internal centralisation of decision making with the executive committee, which had made serious errors of judgement, such as giving people impossible loans and then unreasonably expecting the loans to be paid quickly. It was evident that there was an urge to continue with the traditional loan-repayment attitudes, which entailed the borrower's assuming that a loan does not have to be paid back within a specific and strictly maintained time frame. This

seems contradictory, however, because during the discussion the members had expressed an understanding of the fact that these projects were supposed to be run as businesses in the strict sense of the word.

If this were so, then the *"Molato ha a bole/A loan does not rot"* concept would not hold, which indicates a clash between the way people were used to doing things and the way they were expected to do them in the project. However, they quickly expressed an awareness of the fact that in this instance they probably did not have any choice but to pay as required. One observed that this was just theoretical because the records showed that since 1984 when the loans were first administered and were to be repaid within 3 years, only very few people had actually repaid all of their loans. They continued to cling to the idea that the loans be paid on time because, as they saw it, they were not the only stakeholders in the project. To them, the funding agencies were like the farmers who sowed seeds and wanted to see them grow into plants. Additionally, they would not like to see themselves shamed in the eyes of the foreigners, which indicates their awareness of how external forces operated to influence their actions.

Concern about involvement of the "middleman" in dealing with the funding agency seemed to be a genuine one. The middleman was the agency that signed for the funds on behalf of the group. This concern seemed sincere because evidently information had been lost or communication broken down to the extent that until now the group still had unanswered questions in relation to how much money they had been given. They felt that perhaps, considering the unequal power relations and from a cultural point of view, it was best for them not to seek answers to these issues because *"mpho ha e phetloe meno."* But the uncertainty could also affect the trust levels between the helping system and the recipients, which created an unhealthy climate for subsequent development initiatives of a similar nature.

Such middleman arrangements also encouraged a certain degree of dependency on the part of the group. When they were asked why they did not raise questions about the funds at the beginning, they mentioned several offices that would supposedly check the matter for them but never did. The same dependency problem was indicated when they said that they became aware of the magnitude of the problem of inadequate administration styles and recording of the funds only when the auditors checked their books. This might have been excused as a lack of expertise in financial management matters, but one would also assume that part of the "proper baking" would have been to inculcate skills to enable the members to deal independently with problems such as these,

especially in a system where services were said to be limited, in which case the services of an external auditor might not be guaranteed five years later.

Such dependency at the internal group level was evident in the way that the various tasks that the executive committee carried out were emphasised. Very little mention was made of what the subcommittees or the general membership did, which could also be an indication of the way the group engendered the elements of a bureaucratic system where the rest of the membership was accountable to the committee, which in turn was accountable to the government through the cooperative league. The cooperative league, incidentally, was an affiliated member of the international umbrella body for cooperatives. A critique of such bureaucratic formations and the way that they could impinge on the sustainability of projects such as this one will form part of the overall analysis of the cases in this research.

Human-resources development features a great deal in development theory and practice. This case was no exception. Evidence in the data suggested that in the participants' perception, human resources were managed efficiently at some points in the project and not at others. It was clear from the discussions that the dynamics of the conflict at the internal group level and the often unsuccessful attempts to resolve it were contributory factors to the problems of the group, such as the loss of some members. The strength of the arguments on why the conflict was unresolved lies in the belief that people in this culture have always been preoccupied with peace. It has been said, however, that such preoccupation has been accentuated by the country's political history, where people were terrorised for viewing the situation critically. A contrary view to this holds that such preoccupation is in fact an indicator of modernity, where people are too concerned about acquired status such as socioeconomic background as opposed to age to indicate ascribed status. This clearly points to a changed value system in this regard.

The members' perceptive descriptions of how those with less status became marginalised in the project made possible an application of class-based analysis of rural development program implementation and sustainability. The members' awareness of their increased differences in social status and how they impacted on their interactions with each other was evident and deserves special attention in this analysis. Among the factors that accounted for this, access to economic resources was mentioned most frequently. In the literature reviewed it was also mentioned that access to migrant labour earnings by some of the rural families in Lesotho contributes to inequality among these families because some become part of the proletariat of the industrialised South Africa.

These observations clearly raise the notion of social differentiation that has enjoyed attention in classical sociology, especially in the theories of social change. The members of these projects articulated the increasing heterogeneity among them as people pursued economic interests in the form of income and social benefits such as power, authority, status, and control. This made the pursuit of group goals difficult as the struggles for resources, which sometimes resulted in conflict, intensified.

The members mentioned their struggle to pursue their individual economic interests without jeopardising their social value, which is peace. They have attempted to adopt and adapt their organisational styles, such as volunteering their labour, but also to gain economically, or they have postponed dealing with loan delinquents to keep peace. All of these are processes full of unresolved contradictions, making development a dialectical process. The contradictions did not contribute positively to project sustainability. The discussions, however, did not move beyond the recognition that people differed according to social status in trying to relate it to the causes of the differences in access to resources, such as gender in this context, or to the causes of the differences in access to the means of production, such as class, to borrow further from Marxist theory. The issue of status in this regard may make relative later in the dissertation the challenge of postmodern feminist critique, which in its questions about the totalising of metanarratives goes further to challenge even the category of *women* (Parpart, 1989).

A general concern was expressed about change. As perceived by the participants, some of the indicators for change are greed and self-centredness as a result of materialistic attitudes. These attitudes have in turn made people forget some of the fundamental principles that have helped to maintain their social fabric. Principles such as *"ntoa ke ea malula 'moho"*—that is, those who live together are bound to fight—were cited, and the participants said that these principles were undermined by people's pursuit of material benefits and the accompanying status. These pursuits were not unifying factors, in the opinion of the participants. For example, it was becoming increasingly harder for people to volunteer their services, because some of those expected to volunteer had acquired the skills by paying for the training. Of interest in this research is how these evident contradictions relate to the sustainability of projects such as this.

A clear line of distinction was drawn between change that was seen as emanating from natural processes (such as the fact that the soil does not produce as much any more) and change that was state engineered. For example, the state assigned different parts of the system to service the rest of it, such as the introduction of VDCs in village leadership or extension services in different ministries. The unquestioning acceptance or detached

recognition of the legitimacy enjoyed by the central system and the power relations that this implies are unsettling; that is, if critical theory is to be followed in rural development thinking.

Case 3: The Mutual-Benefit Funeral Society

General Description

The mutual-benefit funeral society was a group of women who contributed and saved money together to take care of funeral arrangements for their next of kin and other dependents when and as the need arose. This group was started in 1988 by four women and one man. By the end of that year the membership figure had increased to 20, and at the time of the study it had 90 members. Of these, about 10 were classified as nonactive members, which means that they had large arrears and did not take an active part in the group sessions.

This group operated in a small community about 35 kilometres from Maseru. It drew its membership from several villages that are close to each other and are under the administrative jurisdiction of one chief. However, because of the closeness of its central village of operation to the university community, some of its members were employees of the university who did not necessarily reside in any of the surrounding villages.

At the time of the interviews, the group had contributed varying sums of money towards burials of the next of kin for 27 families. Given the possibility of more than one death occurring in one family within this period, the figure could in fact have been higher. Payments were in two categories. A larger sum of R1,000 was due for the death of an immediate family member such as a husband, a son, and the parents on both sides; that is, parents and parents-in-law. As well, for any registered next of kin or dependent (members were allowed to register up to six people), a contribution of R200 was due. Registration in the group was by families and not individuals. Therefore, all the women in the group registered under their husbands as heads of the households.

It is worth noting that the larger sum of money is only a minimum figure because, in actual fact, it was not given as money but as a cow, which is symbolic of a proper funeral in this culture. Therefore, the responsible members, once notified of a death and the date of burial, shopped for a cow—an ox for a male and a cow for a female deceased. Then they would buy, transport, and present it to the family of the deceased the day before the funeral, as is done traditionally. In contrast, the money for the

dependents was given in cash, but it was expressed as an equivalent of two goats or sheep. These amounts were adjusted from time to time according to changes in the economic situation and in the prices of goods and services. For an immediate family member, a son or daughter who died at less than 5 years of age, the family would receive half of the sum received for an older child, dependent members, or the parents who are members, because for a child that age, normally there is no big funeral. For two daughters-in-law who have joined the group, if their father-in-law died, they were entitled to receive only one cow.

Initial registration was R10, and each family paid R2.00 a month and an additional R5.00 each time a death occurred. Additionally, R1.00 was paid monthly by all for the transport of the cow. Records were kept on the monthly payments for each family, and these were checked at each monthly meeting. For any family who fell behind in payments, the group's laws stated the possible consequences quite explicitly. However, before any punitive measures have been taken, several reminders will have been sent to the members. This now brings the discussion to the way that the group is managed.

This was a more or less informal group, as the members described it. It was run by seven duly elected committee members who are supposed to be reelected every three years. However, the person running the group has now been in place since the group's inception about seven years ago. The participants said that the members were happy with this committee, so that when elections are due, members are only reshuffled into different positions. The committee, with the rest of the members, prepared laws presented in point form which stated exactly how the group was be run and stipulated the recipients of benefits, the conduct of registrations, the payments, the expected conduct of members, their rights and responsibilities, and the penalties that would be enforced and how they would be enforced if members did not meet their obligations. They also stipulated the procedures to be followed to inform the group of a death in a member's family. Based on the members' understanding of the prevailing cultural practices, the laws also explicitly mentioned members' intentions of noninterference in polygamous situations.

At the time of research the group had R16,000.00 in the bank. These funds were accessed by the committee through two co-signatories every time there was a need. These two people were also responsible for the group's monthly banking transactions and kept any other financial records of the group, such as what funds were used, when, and for what purposes.

Focus-Group Data Presentation

An Account in the Members' Voices

This group was started in January 1988 with the aim of buying each other a cow. We were to buy each other a cow in case of death. We all know the significance of a cow when somebody dies in our society. A cow has to be slaughtered "ho felehetsa mofu" . . . to accompany the dead to his/her grave and ancestors.

What happened was, four of us women were at the water source. We were talking about problems. More specifically, we were talking about the high rates of deaths, poverty, and the way it is becoming more and more difficult for people to bury their dead. And so we got to this idea of getting together to address the problem. During the course of our discussions we were joined by a certain man who became part of our group since then. So the idea was further discussed with us having invited more women. And when the idea was finally crystallised, we agreed on M10 as the initial fee for registration of a family. We then approached the village chief, who supported us and got us an official letter to enable us to open a bank account.

On the basis of the knowledge of some of us with experience from other groups, we conducted a series of meetings to discuss how the group was to be run. And it was at one of these meetings that we elected a committee that approached the chief about such formalities as introduction of the group and the letter that enabled us to open a savings account with a local bank. Contributions of M2.00 per month at meetings are made by each family into this account through the committee. At the scheduled meetings every last Sunday of the month the funds are collected, and they are deposited in a bank. It is also at these meetings that members are free to check how much has been deposited in the account and to ask questions or make comments or suggestions on the running of the group. It was also at such meetings that we were able to prepare our rules of operation, as you can see them. These get modified each time a need to do so arises.

The description of the decision-making processes in the group was that members of the group were responsible for decisions and their follow-up. For example, they said that the treasurer and another member of the committee collected the money and deposited it in the bank. It was the responsibility of each member at the end of the monthly meetings to look at the bank book as it circulated to see for herself how the group was doing financially. *"Re fa setho se seng le se seng monyetla oa ho nka boikarabello*/We give each member a chance to be responsible, . . . to ask questions and dispel all the possible misconceptions. They also announce at the meetings how much has been collected."

Asked to comment on how the group was managed, the participants in the discussion pointed to both the members and the committee as being responsible for the management of the group: *"The thing is that we have a strong membership and the*

committee. We all decide. Each one of us knows the problems that brought us together. In addition to that, we have rules that guide us in the running of the group."

Some aspects of how the group was managed were further articulated when the group discussed the way that they normally resolved their conflicts, which they constantly referred to as "minor squabbles." A typical situation that would result in a near-conflictual situation would be if "a member does not go in accordance with the laws." *"And if that happens, we immediately point that out to her. Once we have talked to her, she will evaluate herself/O tla ihlahloba. We give her warning if the need be, and she knows exactly what that means."*

In addition to this explanation, one member explained the procedure of resolving conflict in this group:

> *The procedure [once there is conflict] would be for members to meet and discuss the issue and settle it. And they would do it in such a way that the relations are smooth both inside and outside the group. It really is not difficult because in this group our problems are mainly money-related problems, as you can imagine. If it is two people involved, we sit down with both of them and settle the issue. As we do we constantly remind them of their obligations in the group and in the village. "Ea sa ikemisetsang ho bopa khotso, re mo joetsa hore re tla ma neha ling tsa hae a tsoe mokhatlong"/If one of them is not prepared to make peace, we tell her that we will give her what is due to her and let her leave the group. We show those who do not want to work for peace what they will lose.*

In one member's opinion,

> *there is really no difference between the way we do it in this group and what happens in the village setting. In the village, the normal thing is to call the person concerned to "khotla" [a public traditional meeting place which is one of the key traditional social institutions in this society]. So the men would sit with the two parties and find ways of getting them to make peace/"Motho ea phoso o supuoa ka monoana." The person who would be stubborn would not be expelled from the village, of course, but he would be made to see that he is expected to cooperate in the name of peace. So the members in our group know that if there is a problem, it will be discussed at a meeting and get settled.*

The same member who conceptualised the way that conflicts were settled in the group as quite similar to a village setting further stated:

> *It is the same concept, really, because in the village it is the chief's word which is final/"Ke morena ea nang le lentsoe la ho qetela." In this group the power and authority lie with the members. If one member does not listen, then we can use our power/"Matla ke a litho."*

The village setting served as a model for this group, and it was presumably understood on the basis of the members' experiences within the village system. As was mentioned in the discussion on chieftaincy, the chief's decisions were sanctioned by the people at *khotla.*

Communication is an important feature of development management theory and practice. Within this group the nature of communication was indicated in the following statements from the focus-group participants (underlining added for emphasis):

So the idea of starting this group was further discussed with other women.

We announce at the end of the meetings how much has been collected.

We talked further about how we wanted to run the group.

We give each member the freedom to feel responsible to ask questions and dispel all the possible misconceptions.

The chief was informed about this group; he knows about it and supports it.

If a member seems not to be going in accordance with the law, this is pointed out to her.

Before each meeting the committee meets to decide what will be communicated to the members.

If a member does not pay well, they know that they will not get a cow if a family member dies. We explain that to her. We also explain to her that if after six months she chooses to reinstate herself, she would have to start from the beginning with a very large sum of money.

There are also members who would be on the verge of dropping out, and they plead their cases. But we have been firm on our decisions. We do not want to set precedents.

Once a person has dropped out, we give them advice on what they could do to regain their membership/"Re na le ho thiba sekheo." There is an arrangement by which people can bring somebody in their name to use their subscriptions to register. All this is explained and left for the person to decide.

When the members think one of the laws is unfair, we discuss that at a meeting and amend it accordingly.

Members who fall behind in their payments are reminded, warned, and the possible consequences explained to them.

Despite these positive and practical statements about the nature of communication in this group, there were also concerns expressed about poor or lack of communication. There was controversy surrounding how the cows were bought. The focus-group

participants were not quite certain about what it entailed. What they had observed was that

> *it was the same people going to buy these cows all the time. Most likely there were some benefits, such as the money allowances for the trips; amounts for these are not specified. It is usually just explained under the broad categories of "lunch" and transport costs.*

As a result of this benefit, the other group members who would otherwise also have volunteered to go on the buying trips sometimes never knew when the buying was to be done. Therefore, it was hard to volunteer.

This issue of communication was worrying to one member, who said that the chairperson would tell you that there were certain decisions and actions that were taken without his/her prior knowledge. For the rest of the membership, the focus-group participants said that poor communication or misinformation in the group was usually a direct result of some members' poor attendance of meetings. *"Ba utloa ka bo bare/They depend too much on hearsay."*

The discussions on the negative picture of communication spilled over to the area of the overall problems of the group as perceived by the members. Implicit in the above discussion was the problem of monopoly over tasks by certain individuals in the group, which in the process denied other members the opportunity to learn to perform these tasks. Of concern to all of the focus group members was the silence that members have maintained about these controversial issues. In trying to establish why this was so, some people thought that it was due to the fact that "none of us wants to be a bad member who asks too many questions. People do not ask questions because they do not want to create some form of enmity for themselves." One member gave an example of the possible enmity:

> *I remember almost getting into trouble over the issue of the same people buying these cows. I also questioned the practice of not producing receipts for both the cows bought and the lunches. And now it is even worse since the abattoir closed down. We are now buying the cows from neighbours, relatives, and friends. And for some reason those cows are more expensive than what we used to pay at the "feedlot," and they are not as good. And still we do not get receipts; word of mouth is enough.*

To most of the members in the group, the real problem was money. They explained the usual antagonism between the rest of the membership (in groups of this nature) and the committees:

They will elect people into the committee, and all of a sudden they look at them with suspicion. . . . They are their enemies. I don't really know what this means, but my guess is that it all has something to do with money. "Moo ho nang le chelete batho ha ba tsepane"/Where there is money, people do not trust each other. It is as if people benefit anything from being in these committees.

A close connection was made between the evils of money and the overall change in society as envisaged by the members. Money was said to be evil and "slippery" in one observation:

If we worked in this group with things such as goats or bags of maize, each member would go out and look at them, see their number, size, age, and even their colours. But with money it is a totally different concept. It is slippery in the sense that you can even report by mouth what is not written on paper. Money by me is a dangerous thing. It is the source of most of people's problems.

However, they stated that, as one of the indicators of change, people need to work with money; but it was clear that

life is not the same any more. In the past people used to feel like they needed each other. Interdependence was a large part of our being. Not any more. People are becoming more and more individualistic. "Ke bo maikhona"/People do not care about each other any more. These are the times we live in/"Ke mehla eo re phelang ho eona": all because of money.

Asked to elaborate on what money has to do with individualism, one person stated:

I can give you an example of a situation that I experienced with a neighbour. Her mother had died. You will not believe me when I tell you that present at the funeral were people from far afield. The neighbours, very few attended. It is a shame, isn't it? We will only attend and stay with you depending on how much "tea" you give us. So material benefits are a real big issue now. But in the very rural areas, when a death occurs we are all there for each other. We will be there throughout.

One indicator of this change was that

people used to obey their chiefs/"Bane ba mamela marena a bona." Not any more. They have too many engagements in pursuit of money. And those chiefs too, do not wield as much power and authority as they used to. People do not listen when you do not have money. People influence each other in a bad way. There is no love any more, and there is too much talking at each other's backs. People individualise things too much.

On the whole, the main problem for the group which was not money related, in the opinion of the participants, was that of nonattendance at meetings. Opinion was strong that people did not like the meetings because they took too long: They took too long to start and too long to finish. People also did not attend because they were not ordered

to attend, as the chiefs would do. However, it should be noted that in other project groups, such as the multipurpose and the chicken-raising, people said that they no longer obeyed the chiefs if they did not have money.

On a positive note, they attributed the fact that things seemed to be working out well in this group to the fact that it was a women's group. This contrasted sharply with the view on the lack of confidence in women that was expressed in both the chicken-raising and the multipurpose groups.

> *Women naturally believe in cooperation/"Bo m'e ke batho ba boikopanyo." When they are together, women talk about problems, . . . pertinent issues, you know, that impact on their lives and those of their families. Men do not talk about those things.*

One member added:

> *Yes, oh yes, this almost entirely is a women's group. Most men I can bet do not even know that their wives are taking part here. It is women who run this group because even the few male members we have do not attend that well. It is women who know problems, especially those problems in the families/"Ke bo me ba tsebang mathata a ka lapeng." For instance, when a death occurs it is the woman who is expected to make decisions about what is to take place and how. You can see from the fact that we have added another feature to our group, that of loans for school fees and uniforms, that we know the types of problems we are faced with.*

Another member added in a straightforward manner:

> *This is a women's group. Some man out of ignorance may say otherwise, but we can freely boast of it as our own ingenious creation. Yes, he might refute that because he does not know/"Me lefu la khoho ke ho se tsebe." He does not know, and we would not blame him because as far as we are concerned, he is just a child. What does he know, really, because the next thing he will ask, quite shamelessly too, is "What about this place where you normally go on Sundays—can't they help?"*

All laughed at this, which they agreed was a vivid description of what a man would typically do or how he would behave when a death for which he was not prepared occurred, forgetting that when a woman first got involved, he discouraged her or made it difficult for her to participate. Regrettably, they said, when all had been achieved (meaning when the dead had been buried, in this instance), all the credit will go to the man. The general belief is that no woman can buy a cow, after all, so it must have been a man. They also said that women sit and watch their credit taken away from them and do not complain. The reason for this, they explained in a resigned manner, was that,

yes, we are Basotho, and we know that a man is the head of the family. Yes, it is known. It is not even just in these groups; even in life in general, women hardly ever get credit for their positive contributions. Why?

"We are Basotho" implied that Basotho have specific ways of doing things that are acceptable to "us," and we have learnt and internalised them. One view was that

it would really not help us to complain. In any case, we have learnt to accept these things, especially because we have been made that way. We have too much sympathy. It is our culture too. That is the way we were brought up. We want to please the men. And that is the way it used to be. And when a man chooses to acknowledge your contribution, he would do so in your absence; that is, if his conscience troubles him. It's hard for him to say "The wife did it" because if he did, in the eyes of other men he would not be man enough.

This statement indicated that socialisation has played a big role in the way that the women perceived these issues and themselves. As well, it was on the basis of these perceptions that they organised in the manner that they did. They seemed to sympathise with men but were also unhappy about their situation, even though they did not discuss the issue any further. In spite of all these gender issues, when they were asked to comment on the impact of the project, the group members evaluated it positively. Most specifically, they mentioned three types of benefits that they had derived from the venture: *"We have avoided going to the banks, where they need collateral. This often led to the loss of major items such as a piece of land just because one could not pay a loan for a funeral."* Also, *"We have avoided disappointments with banks and embarrassments to the families."*

Socially, the members thought that they had temporarily closed the gap between the rich and the poor. They felt that the two had come together to bury their dead buried in a similar kind of way. In this connection, they also said, *"We have minimised the amount of crying that used to accompany deaths."*

Right now people cry over the loss, not over that plus "How am I going to bury him?" This might seem like an individual problem, but it would be a community problem, because once she started asking herself how the dead was going to be buried, she would knock from door to door borrowing money and really embarrassing the rest of us.

Preliminary Case Analysis

This group collectively saved money to address a socially oriented type of development. It was not a profit-driven, but instead a service-oriented activity. What they did was development because it responded to current socioeconomic demands that funeral services place on families. In these funeral societies, people achieved in a group what they could not achieve individually (Sechaba Consultants, 1995). It is therefore evident from the foregoing presentation of data on the case that it was a largely locally based and run development initiative. Its goals were anchored around a culturally entrenched social practice, the slaughtering of a cow when an adult family member dies. The need to initiate the group to address the problem was also identified by the local women. According to the data, women in this culture are expected to be in the forefront in making arrangements for a funeral, so they presumably can relate better to a situation where someone has died and there is no cow to be slaughtered, or the overall funeral arrangements are made under difficult financial conditions; hence their concern and urge to work collectively to alleviate such situations.

The idea to start this activity was conceived at the water source, which is an informal but socioculturally accepted seat or spot where women can use up part of their leisure time while doing their laundry and fetching water for home use. Asked why it happened at the *nokana* or water source, they explained that this is the place where women get a chance to network amongst themselves, to exchange ideas when the men and children are not present. *"And above all, it is at this place where we get a brief moment to socialise."*

Soon after the idea had crystallised, it was communicated to the village chief. This was a timely observance of village protocol, and as such also a timely solicitation of support from a local authority and institution. Writing on the role of traditional social institutions (such as the chieftaincy) in development in Lesotho, Thoahlane (1984) observed that, even though the modern institutions seem to have weakened the traditional ones, the strength of the latter in enhancing popular participation at the local level is still evident. Involving the chief as they did indicates that the women shared the same view. They said that they involved the chief also because they knew they would need his intervention and support in case they encountered any problems during the course of their operation. Most fortunately, they did not have any problems that required the chief's attention. This group's close involvement with the chief and the faith that they placed in his power and authority can also be seen as an indicator of where the group obtained its legitimacy, which was locally.

Stating that they knew what and who they would need showed (like most of what happened in the project) that the group's actions were based on knowledge and experience gained from life. This type of learning is both informal and experiential, with individual members being responsible for their learning. When they prepared the rules for running the group, they said that they *"Re ipapisitse le mathata a re a tsebang*/we prepared the rules on the basis of our knowledge of the likely problems." Unlike the chicken-raising group members, these members seemed to have a greater degree of confidence in their knowledge and to use it as a foundation for their action rather than waiting to be told by people "who know these things" (chicken growers). They mentioned some of the needs and problematic areas, such as the needs that they wanted to meet through the group, the changing socioeconomic circumstances, and the problems that might arise from people not being willing to work to enhance peace or the way that they ran their lives in general. The fact that people were constantly reminded of their obligations to the group was a continuing nonformal education strategy, with those in the group's leadership acting as facilitators.

Most of the decisions taken in this group were preceded by information sharing, discussions, and agreements, which made everyone responsible for the actions of the group. The expressed high level of independence—*"Re itjere"*—which means "We are entirely on our own" leads to the conclusion that even the decisions made were independent. *"Re itjere"* was stated with a sense of pride. Asked to elaborate on it, the members said that what they meant was, "All we have is ours." This included the laws which are constantly called "our laws." When linked to the comments they made about voluntary service in the group, this sense of independence might also be seen to be contributing to their attitude about their resources. For example, regarding voluntary work, they said that voluntarism is a good thing because it brings about progress when people are committed. They further stated:

> *We do not complain, and we do not want to be paid. We want to grow and get out of this poverty. If we expected pay, and yet we know that there is no money, it would not make sense really. It will just depend on the consideration of those you serve when they eventually decide to relieve you. "E re re mo phomotse o re sebelelitse nako e telele"/Let us retire her; she has served us long enough.*

Information and open communication were predominant features of this group. The committee held discussions amongst themselves and with the members. Such discussions and group meetings have facilitated, among others, making group laws and their amendments, making decisions on problematic members, and rendering advice to the

latter on how to maintain their status. In contrast to the multipurpose organisation—where one of the members who dropped out expressed displeasure because if she asked for clarification on certain issues, she was asked to check for herself in the records—in this group, in addition to each member looking at the bank book at the end of the meeting, amounts of money collected were verbally announced, questions were explained, and people were called in to discuss their problems and offer alternatives.[6] Such open communication in the funeral society also minimised surprises in the group, where, at the end, members started to say, "If I had known, . . . I would not have acted in such a way." The committee expressed a degree of confidence in the membership which was not evident in the other three cases. This style of getting everyone involved was an indicator of a decentralised system of management. The amendment of laws and the accommodative system where people could lose their membership but later be reinstated also showed flexibility as well as sensitivity to individual circumstances. The general attitude was that what might have seemed to be individual circumstances might well have been consequential for the collectivity. An example of this is the concern expressed about what might happen if a member had burial problems which turned out to be an embarrassment to everyone.

The above attitude further explained the further accommodative nature of the management of this group, where a borrowing feature was introduced to take care of the urgent need for school fees and uniform. This aspect was not part of the original goals, but because of being close to the situation, the leadership, together with the members, added this feature. There were no pretences about the group activity being a business and supposedly quite separate from the lives of the people outside it; this is evidently a holistic view of development.

In spite of what could be called an attitude of near helplessness regarding some of the problems that confronted the group, such as gender-related concerns, change and modernity, and decreasing love among people, the awareness of the problems can be construed as a step towards solving them. Prominent among these were problems that related to change as perceived by the focus-group participants. Money was obviously one of the key elements in this change. Where there was money involved, the

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[6]A striking feature too in the records of the multipurpose group were standard letters of reminder that were sent at specific intervals to members who owed money to the project. The records indicated that, although at some times the letters prompted immediate payment, most of the time they did not. People paid whenever they could.

participants observed, "People do not trust each other, they are not satisfied; it is as if you are getting some benefits." Hence built into their financial management strategies were attempts to be as open as possible in communicating money-related matters. The members expressed regret that in this connection, some members of the group, out of greed, did not account for some of the money. In the process, they also monopolised whatever benefits accrued from handling the money and the purchases. To them, this was part of the materialism that they felt had come as a result of change, which leads to too much individualism/*"Batho ke bo maikhona."* Such understanding and acknowledgement of the existence of individualism and its possible militating effects against cooperative work could act as a basis for the struggle to forge more efficient development management styles, because the potential to solve a problem starts with an awareness of it.

Of further concern was the relationship, as perceived by the participants, between money, materialism, and social status. They were concerned that even for the local social institutions such as chieftaincy, its power and authority were undermined because people do not listen to a chief who does not have money. If one closely examines the hierarchical organisational structure of local government in Lesotho, chieftaincy is closest to the people. Within the broad category of chiefs are principal chiefs, ward chiefs and village chiefs, and headmen. Within this hierarchy are the "lowest level" chiefs, who are closest to the people. Although the senior chiefs receive some form of remuneration from government (Sechaba Consultants, 1995), the most junior chiefs do not. The people know which chiefs are remunerated and which are not.

Within these various levels, the chiefs who are responsible at the local level serve as the principal contact point within the decentralised government system (Thoahlane, 1984). Individually and in their service in the village development councils (VDCs), they are a liaison and a viable link between the people and higher power authorities. They are expected to mobilise material and human resources, as well as to supervise development programmes. In fact, Thoahlane (1984) observed that the VDCs find their strength when integrated with the traditional institution of chieftaincy. If money was as much a factor as the focus-group members appeared to believe strongly, not only in this case but in all the cases, it might not be a farfetched notion to suggest a local-level development planning strategy that recognises and is responsive to the possible correlation and interplay between leadership, money, and performance. In particular, the relation between the monetary rewards paid to the local authorities and their performance in development programs should be addressed. This means that it could be

that the chiefs, especially those who are not salaried, are not respected for that reason, and their possible positive role in development efforts may be stifled by this. In fact, the participants in one of the focus groups indicated that, even chiefs are not respected if they do not have money.

Case 4: The Dairy-Farming Cooperative

General Description

This is a registered dairy-farming cooperative started in 1987 by a group of about 10 families. The cooperative was initiated in response to an expression of concern about the recurrent strikes by mine workers in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). A great number of Basotho men work in the RSA mines. Usually at the end of such strikes, some of them would have lost their jobs and would have been sent back home. If this were to happen, then some of the members of this group would become victims. This cooperative employment-creation and income-generating venture was therefore a preparatory response to the possible eventuality.

The project was located in a rural community more than 50 kilometres from Maseru in the foothills of the district. Each family contributed R200 as a start-up payment. The original plan was to use the collected funds to purchase a dairy cow or cows for the first few families, and then to continue to contribute and buy until each family had a dairy cow. However, this plan was not pursued by independent means once the members heard about institutions that would give financial assistance. Such assistance would offset the financial burden on the families and speed up the project's processes. In the next three to six months of the project initiation, the members concentrated their efforts on soliciting funds from various sources.

The advice that they had from the local agricultural officer was that their idea would make a viable income-generating project. They first approached the National Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), but their request was not successful because they could not raise the necessary collateral. They also applied to the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC). Though it is an educational institution, the centre has a division, Service Agency, which is responsible for small rural development project assistance. This division is financially supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Here they received promises that were never fulfilled. With the third agency, the African Development Foundation (ADF), the

response was that the funding was temporarily suspended, but they did not learn for how long.

At the time of the interviews the members had not approached any other institution. On reflection, they said that they realised how much they had been preoccupied with seeking external funding. This had distracted them from focusing on their goal. However, they were still hopeful, but they were at the same time thinking very seriously about starting all over again. This would be hard, however, because they had exhausted all their funds on the trips they made to seek information seeking to prepare appropriate proposals for the funding agencies. Some of the trips took them as far as the South African farms, where they had hoped to buy a good breed of cows.

The main activity between the inception of the project and the time of research (apart from the grant seeking) was the training in dairy farming and cooperatives, which led to their registration within a year as a formal cooperative entity. From that time until the time of the interviews (seven years later), no other activity occurred except for occasional meetings. As a result, the members could not confidently discuss some of the issues that were raised in the research of the other three cases, such as the overall management of the projects, the experiences and perceptions about collective rural development efforts, or the problems encountered. Most of the ideas they had, which were valuable nonetheless, were based on knowledge gained from life and from their experiences from similar groups.

Focus-Group Data Presentation

An Account in the Members' Voices

According to the focus-group members, this group was started because of concern about the possible long-term repercussions of the strikes in the South African mines for some of the men in the village. They explained that

> *all of us were concerned, really, because we knew that at the end of these strikes people usually are out of jobs, so we started talking amongst ourselves about how we could address the problem of loss of jobs. In fact, there are quite a number of men in this area who already lost their jobs, and as we all know, it can be quite hard. There are no jobs in Lesotho. When there are any, the pay is so poor. So we talked about raising dairy cows through cooperative efforts.*

Further explaining where the project was at the time of the research, the participants discussed how difficult it was for them to raise the funds, even though they were convinced that dairy keeping would make a good business for them:

> *When we asked around for the price of cows, it became clear to us that R200 (which was the sum we had agreed upon per family]) was not going to enable us to reach our target fast. And as you can imagine, not all of us would be able to pay the amount all at once, so it was going to be hard, we realised. And that is when we started talking about getting help.*
>
> *Some of us had a little knowledge about the Agricultural Development Bank. We approached the bank. I remember the first time we went, we even had our chief with us, who was also a member. The bank explained that to lend us money we would need to put a 10% down payment on the total loan. You can imagine, about ten cows for ten families at about R2,000; that is, R20,000 or even more if we included the feeding. And as I said, we had all not paid. Some of us were still just struggling, so we could not raise that 10%. When we went back, the bank now said they needed an additional 20% per member. So the total was 30%. This made things really hard for us. We were all confused. And it slowly became obvious to us that we could not continue with the bank. This is how we ended up with the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre. We were advised by somebody to approach the LDTC.*[7] *Another member can continue from here.*

The other member continued the account as follows:

> *So we were advised to go to LDTC. When we got there, we were received very well; they were happy to have us. They even mentioned that the way things were, they would serve us quite fast/"Ba tla re etsetsa ka pele." They even said that they did not need receipts. They just asked us to do some research in relation to the things we needed, such as how much each cow would cost. We even went to the extent of spending our saved money on the trips to find information. We had to go to South Africa, which is where we hoped we would buy good dairy breeds from. And when we had the information, we kept reporting to them. At one stage we went with one of their officers to continue to do the research so that they too could have first-hand information. And after that they even came to officially tell us that our request had been approved and that we just had to wait to hear from them about when the funding would be coming. But after that we never saw or heard from them again.*

Commenting on the official notification about the funding, the participants said that three LDTC officers came personally. They had asked them to call a *pitso*, a public

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[7]The LDTC—Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre—is an educational institution (within Lesotho's Ministry of Education). It is modelled along the lines of the Open University in the United Kingdom or Athabasca University in Alberta, Canada. In addition to offering (by correspondence) courses at junior and high school level for people who cannot go to school full time, the LDTC does development-related work of the type studied in the thesis. Even though it has a small-projects assistance fund, the role of LDTC in these activities places more emphasis on the educational component of the programmes.

gathering that is only facilitated by the chief, and they announced the funding at the *pitso* in 1991.

> *Then, when we did not see them any longer, once in a while we would meet one of them [those that had been at the "pitso"]. And we would ask what was happening, and they would say all was well, and that our request was left with just this one last person to make a decision. They all always sounded like they could not have access to this last person. So we stayed and waited. We just had to depend on them for guidance until now.*

A participant gave an account of what happened between that time and the time of research:

> *We have been trying, really. We then heard about others who were also said to be likely to help. I can't remember their name, . . . but they work from the Fairways Centre. We went to them too. But they said they had closed temporarily. Yes, I think it was ADF. And right now I understand they have a new office. But that is where we ended with them, since they did not even indicate when they would open again.*

When the discussions were moved beyond the history to reflect on the situation as it unfolded, the participants' reflections were as follows:

> *I want to start with the Agricultural Development Bank because those are the people I was personally involved with. In my opinion their dealings with the public were not very well explained. You really do not understand the way they work. It is a bank, you want money from it, and it wants money from you. This did not sit well with us. I mean, really, we did not understand. It was also difficult to raise the 30% they wanted from us.*

Further on the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank, a member expressed a slightly different opinion:

> *In my view, this bank has deviated from its original goals or function, which was to meet the farmers halfway. This is the way we all understood it. So when you look closely at the way it functions, it becomes clear that cases are treated individually. There does not seem to exist a proper and standard procedure; it just depends who is in the office at the time a request is received. Even for the regulations that are there, like for those dealing with loans, the interpretations differed drastically from officer to officer. That is what we experienced with our request. It seems to work like any other bank, which is not the impression we were given when it was started.*

On the LDTC another participant observed that

> *in that institution I think it was a question of internal issues/"Ene ele litaba tsa ka hare." If the internal management is weak, then what do you expect them to achieve with the public? The way they worked with us superficially, it seemed all right. But it looks like internally or higher in the hierarchy they had problems. And the fact that we did not have access to the higher levels was quite frustrating. But they did have their problems, unfortunately.*

On the same issue, another participant said:

And that really concerned us. We asked ourselves a lot of questions because not even once were we allowed or encouraged to talk to those in the higher level; "re nere ntse re fella tlaase feela"/we ended up only at the lower levels, so we never got to know what the real problem was.

However, another participant's understanding was that

in the LDTC, really, one can say, for the people we worked with directly, they had done their homework quite satisfactorily. If anything, as the previous speaker said, they seemed to have problems at the higher levels/ "Mathata ane a le boholong." So when we meet them in the street . . . and as it is, when you have worked with somebody and you are needy like us you still ask. . . . It becomes apparent that their institution's priority area is education, so this assistance fund is just an activity on the side. The way they explained was that our request reached them at the time when the fund was exhausted. They had to wait for the previous borrowers to pay before they could start lending again.

It was evident from the discussions that this mission to solicit external financial assistance involved a great deal of "networking" on the part of the project members. Asked to reflect on the experience, a participant said:

For some of us who were involved directly, this was a new experience. This, however, was not a really big problem. It becomes a big problem when people who have no jobs but have big plans such as ourselves are concerned. We ran around pursuing this goal, but going to people and depending on them like this can be problematic. I want to believe if we started on our own and did not set our hopes on the financial assistance in the way we did, we would be very far by now. The advice and encouragement to seek funding hindered our progress so much, more so that we even had to spend the little we had on all these contacts.

In another participant's view:

Networking like that is really not a big problem. In my view there is nothing terribly wrong with exploring opportunities if they exist and may be taken/"Ha hona letho le phoso ka ho batla menyetla." I only see a problem if the help is not forthcoming and it has cost us so much. But I might also mention to you that we have not given up hope, and we would still appreciate the assistance if it were to come. Networking is a learning experience. It gives people a chance to meet people as we did while we pursued our goal. Sometimes it is a difficult thing, but it also has a potential for good benefits/ "E ka re fumantsa melemo."

According to another participant:

Yes, networking is an educational experience. It is also a test for us. When you reach the agricultural bank or these other unfamiliar institutions and you confront new situations, you ask questions and you are learning. It only becomes disadvantageous if eventually it turns out to have been just an empty task.

Still focusing on the LDTC, another view was that:

it also becomes difficult or tedious if the structures are complex and the lines are not very open. Like in the case of the LDTC, I personally knew the person at the top, but I know him outside the office. He is from my home area. But I could not just "catch him up in a corner" and take advantage of that fact. That is not the way it is supposed to be; it does not work that way. But the lines, "mecha e nepahetseng"/the proper channels, delay progress most of the time. To me it is just like if you go to somebody's house intending to enter through the door that you see, only to be told that "that is not the right door," so if you do not know the right door, then you will go back. This is what happened to us in this case.

Having mentioned several times that their project experience had been brief and that, as such, they did not feel confident to discuss some of the issues that surrounded the research question, such as project management, the participants were left to discuss these issues on the basis of their experiences from other groups. The assumption was that these were the experiences that they would have applied if their project had worked. In their discussions their perceptions about the change expressed in socioeconomic terms were prominent. Starting with the education and training they received, one member said:

We were taught a lot of things, because the types of cows we were going to keep were different. Some of what we were taught was completely new information, while some of it was what we already knew about cows in general. We went for the training in town, and we have all our certificates. But beyond this, we really cannot say much because we have not been able to apply what we learnt.

On running a cooperative of the type that the participants were going to run, which was a large part of what they learned, they said the important thing was that these things are run according to specific laws. In discussing the issue, they felt that "it is one thing to have laws, but quite another to apply them":

Yes, and it is sometimes clear that, in spite of the laws, we work on some issues just in the ways we are used to. For example, we were taught in some of the training programs that we should write things down, and if things have not been written down, then legally we could lose a case. But in these types of groups, as long as there is evidence that someone, for example, owes

money, or he has insulted another, then we will work on the issue. We would really not need any papers/"Bopaki ba molomo feela bo lokile." Word of mouth is enough.

One member discussed his perception of how things have changed:

I would agree that we do work over a lot of things in the traditional way. But I would again say to you that these traditional practices have been undermined by the new system. Let us look at this example: If you have a complaint against someone, the person will ask you, "Under what section of the law are you taking me to court?" People are now educated/"Batho ba hona joale ba se ba hlalefile." Just look at the lengths we went to to have this group registered as a legal entity. And the rules we would have to apply in dealing with cases pertaining to this group would have to be written laws. We are Basotho, I agree, but the two types of laws are radically different/ "Matsatsing ana lintho li thata haholo." Things are harder these days. People will ask if you try to apply the Sesotho law, "Who has signed the law under which you want me tried?" We need papers for a lot of things. "Re hloka maqoetha le bopaki"/We need lawyers and written evidence.

But one participant argued that,

in my view, if anything is to work properly, it should try not to change your being/"Ha e ea tsoanela ho fetola boleng ba motho." For example, these cooperatives, we would run them very well if they were presented to us as "matsema." But as it is, they are not very different from the work parties, but they are in a different pretext/"Li title ka santhao." If "matsema" ideas were incorporated in these new inve tions, we would understand them better and have no problems with them.

One member expressed a concern that, although they incorporate and adopt, they should also try to go where the rest of the world is going/*"Haeba feela re ea mo ho uoang ho lokile."* This is necessary because they now live in a world/*"mo ho sebetsang sekhooa haholo* in which the Europeans ways are predominant. This implied that, in their determination to preserve their traditional ways, they should not lose sight of the fact that the world is changing, and they are required by circumstances to go along if they are to survive in it.

Probed on the issue of "where the world is going," one of the participants said, "We really cannot say exactly where the world is going, but we are still searching. And as it is, we too want to reach the top of the hill/*"Le rona re batla ho hloella ka holimo ho thaba."* But in another participant's opinion,

Where the world is going we know. This is why we were able to say quite explicitly what we wanted, what we planned to do and how: by cooperation. But I do not agree with the insinuation that we should not accommodate Sesotho if it does not take us where the rest of the world is going. In our Sesotho saying, "Letlaila le tlailela Morena"/Even he who sings terribly, [supposedly in church] God still listens to him/her. So if the Basotho ways

are part of the "Botlaila" [i.e., singing badly], why can it not be accepted as such, and let us keep going? For example, do you remember that at the training we had such a big argument over the fact that Basotho know how to help if a cow is having some difficulties giving birth to a calf? They just did not want to believe us. And yet we have done these things and depended on them for a long time.

In the foregoing discussions, the concern about change and the use of the traditional ways alongside the new ones is very well articulated. Asked to give their opinions on the impact of the little that there had been of the project, the members said that it would really be hard to discuss the issue. However, they expressed an opinion on what would have sustained the project, had it worked. For the problems one participant said:

First thing is lack of trustworthiness. And also if the levels of cooperation are low, indicated by poor attendance at working sessions or at meetings, then the group has problems. But above all these, if the communication system is poor, then that group will collapse.

They did not discuss at this point what the causes of these problems in general were; however, on the root cause of their group's collapse, they said that their group had not collapsed, but that lack of resources—money, to be specific—had been its major problem. In the words of one participant, one of the major problems was:

In my opinion there are many things. The political situation too can be a damaging factor in people's efforts to work together. For example, in Lesotho where there is a BCP and a BNP[8] member, there are clashes. These two cannot work together because of political-party inclinations. This interferes in groups, and it is bad. And related to that, Basotho believe so much in their chiefs, the traditional leaders/"Boetapele ba moetlo." And these people, if you can watch them closely, in my opinion they use the principle of "Divide and Rule." Do you know this? They team up their subjects or divide them according to their personal interests. This really kills people's initiatives to cooperate on development issues. Now, under normal circumstances we are not supposed to disagree with these chiefs, and if you do, you are an enemy to him and all those around him. And the chiefs are generally quite oppressive and quick to remind us that the land belongs to their forefathers.

And still on leadership, the other thing that impacts negatively on project performance is election into committees of people who do not have proper leadership qualities or the determination to do the work.

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[8]The BCP—Basotholand Congress Party—is a party that was most prominent among the several opposition parties to the BNP—Basotho National Party—which ruled autocratically for more than 20 years. The BCP is the ruling party now in Lesotho since the country returned to civilian rule in April 1993 after seven years of a military government.

Encouraged to explain the choice of people lacking good leadership qualities, this member said:

> *The other thing is status. People have a tendency to be tolerant of mistakes just because they have been made by people of certain socioeconomic standing. They would rather cover up for those people. This lack of honesty and buying people's faces is not good in groups. But I guess it is human nature.*

Still on leadership as a possibly negative factor, another view was:

> *Another thing that kills projects is redundant leadership (i.e., people who stay in committees for too long). And yet, most often they are not even doing much. They stay there and begin to feel indispensable, and this stems from a membership that does not like responsibility. So it keeps putting the same people back into leadership. This encourages some degree of authoritarianism.*

One issue that had emerged earlier from the discussion on the problems that projects face was that of the types of cooperatives as they were known at that time. There was a shared view that

> *"matsema," or work parties as they were in the past (we see them as an equivalent of the present cooperatives), did not have an element of profit making/"litsiane." These are the things that breed corruption/"Ho ba le bobolu hobane ho shebiloe litsiane." People are preoccupied with profits more than work.*

In one member's view,

> *what is a total failure for me is this issue of cooperative ownership/"likhoho tsa mokhatlo." These things are about responsibility, and there is no way you can hold two or more people responsible at the same time. That is when the need for a hired person would arise—a hired person you can talk to directly and ask him/her if anything goes wrong at the project site. If not, then when it does not work, who will answer? And remember, in "matsema" we did not own the field together. That was the difference. It was one person's field that we would work in. And she would be responsible for organising the labour and feeding the people. But this was also a one-time thing. If she needed some more labour she would organise another "letsema"/work party. But in the cooperatives today, we work together continuously. And the laws we use are quite similar throughout the country.*

Preliminary Case Analysis

The idea of responding cooperatively to a socioeconomic situation facing or to be faced by the families involved was sound. The type of activity chosen to meet this need was also culturally anchored and was assessed as economically viable by those

knowledgeable in the field. But the costs to be incurred in order to realise the goal were going to be too high, especially for the families whose male members had already lost their jobs. Therefore, even though the initial action of members contributing their money to meet the goal must be recognized, the move to seek financial assistance also seems to have been justified.

The nature of the financial assistance sought, which was a loan to be paid in due course, was also an indicator of preparedness to depend on their own resources. According to the data on the history of the case, it has became apparent that the group members did not have adequate information on the loan-administration system at the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank (LADB). By the time they had finished dealing with the bank, they still could not understand some of the details. For instance, they could not explain why different officers at the bank had different interpretations of the lending policy. This seems to have contributed greatly to their loss of confidence in the bank as an institution that was supposed to "meet the farmers halfway."

With the LDTC they met a similar kind of disappointment, but with this institution their general belief was that the main problem was internal. More specifically, they mentioned weak management, but no explicit mention was made of how ineffective the management was. They probably perceived the problems that they experienced with the inaccessibility of the higher levels of the structure as indicators of a management system that had no open-door policy. As well, the line of command was not only obviously quite complex and hierarchical, but it also denoted certain power relations. Reference to those whom they could not reach in the structure as *"Ba boholong"* is indicative of their awareness of the existing power relations. *"Ba boholong,"* literally translated, means the "big ones" or those in the higher layers of the structure; and they said, "We always only ended at the lower levels/*Re ne re fella tlaase mona feela."*

The fact that they could not reach some parts of the structure was frustrating to them, but, beyond that, in their opinion it was evidence of inefficiency in the system because of too much concern about the process rather than the outcome. For example, one participant said that he knew the senior officer who was to make the ultimate decision about the fund, but he knew him outside of government structure, and, in his understanding, he could not just "catch him up in a corner" because that is not the way things are done. Evidently, there are procedures, and these usually stand in the way of progress, he observed.

Linked to this criticism of the structures and the way that they operated was the analogy about going to somebody's house and wanting to go through the door that you see, only to be told that that was not the right door. This is a powerful analogy that indicates a strong sense of frustration about the lack of adequate information in their pursuit for help. Seemingly, the information was not only lacking, but when it did become available, it was given in an untimely fashion and was often contradictory. For instance, it was not until they were "at the door" (in the case of both the bank and the LDTC)—which, in the researcher's understanding, means that it was not until they were at the offices of these institutions—that they learnt about certain things. Implied in this critique is that, had the information been readily available and the higher levels of the structure more accessible, they would have known from the outset which door to use.

One also has an impression of concern about some dishonesty experienced with the funding agencies, where in one case the people received promises that were eventually not fulfilled. A useful indicator of the dishonesty was that they learnt only ultimately that the LDTC's priority area was really not the assistance fund, but the educational aspects. Why this was not explained to the group at the beginning remains unclear; or if it was explained, then they clearly misunderstood it, and the impression they had was that they were very close to getting the funding. *"Bare ba tla re sebeletsa ka pele"/* things would be worked out quickly for them, they were told, but this did not happen. Regretted greatly were the costs of the grant seeking, with their resources as limited as they were. As well, when the financial assistance was being sought, meeting the project goals by any other means was ruled out because the group was caught up in the dependency syndrome. In fact, "them" and "they" were used numerous times in the account of the history of the project, which indicates that they held someone else responsible for things as they stand.

However, the project experience, especially the networking, was an educational experience that tapped on the local human resources. It was an opportunity-seeking venture that should have broadened the project members' outlooks on the issues involved. For example, it is evident from the discussions that the change and modernisation processes were fully conceptualised and that the people are also aware that they were a part of the process.

Of concern, however, is the fact that some of the group members were not sure of what direction the world is going. But they said that "we too" would like to reach the top of the hill, implying that they desired to be like the rest of the people who have reached the top. This shows a holistic view of the change process and an awareness of

still being at the starting point of the journey. The only issue of contention in this regard was how to reach the top. In one view, to reach the top of the hill people do not necessarily have to change their being/*"Ha re a tsoanela ho fetola boleng ba rona."* Instead, they must adopt and adapt. However, in another view the people do know where the world is going, which was why they knew exactly how to reach the goals of the project themselves. These are profound statements that coincide with some of the fundamental principles of local development planning such as participatory approaches. These statements and concerns also concur with some of the theories of social change, especially those that perceive change as an evolutionary process in which particular institutions can be developed and certain aspects of culture redefined without a total transformation of society.

The only thing that worried those who held the view that adopting and adapting were the ideal strategy was the fact that in the process there were contradictions and certain indicators of the people's being undermined by others. An example given was the case where an argument occurred when the group members told the trainers that Basotho knew how to deal with a cow that has problems in giving birth. The major question that arises from this, according to the participants, is, "If the old is out of tune with the rest, why can it not be accepted as such, and let us move on?" But opinion was strong that that could not be the case because *"re phela mo ho sebetsang sekhooa haholo/*we live in a world where the European ways predominate."

These debates were a significant indication of a clear conceptualisation of what gave the projects context both in the broad sense and at the specific-project level. Viewed as problematic in the broader context, first, was the perceived lack of honesty (deliberate or incidental) that was experienced with the funding agencies. Secondly, poor communication and limited information, as discussed earlier, were seen as obstacles to progress. This was accentuated by the hierarchical and bureaucratic practices with which the project members were confronted which, in the participants' opinions, were agents of change and seemed to undermine their traditional-knowledge ways by promoting the European ways. The third negative factor was the political situation which, by its nature, was divisive. And fourthly, chieftainship (in the area of leadership), one of the key traditional institutions involved in local development, was heavily criticised. It was attacked for its ruling strategies that were said to encourage factionalism within communities. This situation was also viewed as oppressive and, on the whole, as working against cooperative efforts. Such comments that point to the flaws in this

important part of the system (by people who had earlier shown a holistic view) could in fact suggest faults in the whole system, if a systems approach is adopted in this analysis.

At the project level, critical issues relate to the leadership that often becomes redundant when people stay in office for too long. Other leadership problems involve using the wrong criteria, such as social status, to elect people who do not have good leadership qualities. Regarding membership, poor attendance of sessions had a negative impact on project performance. Concern about specific issues in the development projects, as expressed by those involved, could form an important basis for suggestions to adopt specific strategies in planning the programs. However, it does not seem that these are often understood, taken into account, or given any weight.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

The four project cases can be classified as multipurpose, multidimensional rural development initiatives of a micro nature. This means that they were not highly capital-intensive rural development initiatives. The major common feature that they share is their fundamental organisational mode, which is the pooling of resources both human and material to address social and economic concerns of the members. In any sense of the word, these groups/cases are representative to a certain degree of grassroots organisations in which people struggle to develop themselves, their families, and their communities. However, they represent only a small spectrum of the types of rural development initiatives by women in Lesotho, either individually or collectively. Their organisational structure can be viewed as informal and either simple or complex depending on the purposes for which they are being analysed or what aspects are being assessed.

The general overview of the cases is presented in Table 1, which gives a summary of facts about each case. This table sheds some light on some of the characteristics of the cases, on the basis of which comparisons can be made. Some of the characteristics also comprise the analytic variables and categories of the research. A comparative overview is then given, focusing on the shared similarities and differences. The overview also notes the uniqueness of the cases in relation to one another. Where issues surrounding that uniqueness are pertinent to the research question, they were addressed either in the overview or in the subsequent sections of the dissertation. The overall goal of the overview is to give a condensed form of the data on the cases so as to tie the cases together and set the stage for a holistic conceptualisation of some of the thematic areas that make up the body of this chapter of the thesis. The overview also enabled the researcher to move beyond the data specific to each case to continue with the identification of patterns across the cases. The underlying assumption is that by now the researcher understands the data for individual cases as idiosyncratic and unique phenomenon (Patton, 1987, p. 148). What is left is to use the themes from the individual cases and those that run across cases to address the research question.

Table 1 sheds some light on the characteristics of the cases on the basis of which comparisons can be made. Some of the characteristics also comprise the analytic variables and categories of the research.

A Comparative Overview of the Cases

Similarities

As mentioned earlier, the cases have in common their organisational mode, which is cooperative action to solve individual and collective problems within these rural settings. A major feature of this mode is mobilisation and the pooling of resources both human, in the form of ideas and labour, and material, such as money, land, and equipment. These cases are small-scale, situation-specific, and locally based development initiatives that are also predominantly women initiated and managed. As mentioned elsewhere in the dissertation, these projects are an integral part of the overall development delivery system in Lesotho. In some views they qualify as part of the institutional aspect of rural development and focal points for active local participation. On the whole, to a great extent they tap local ingenuity to engage in development.

They have all been initiated within a broadly defined basic-needs strategy with income and employment creation as their major feature. They are run on a voluntary basis with a specific group of people responsible for their leadership and management. The beneficiaries of these projects are their individual members; and, through them, their families and the communities within which they are situated also benefit. The benefits can be described in both monetary and nonmonetary terms. They also operate within a national environment that has specific social, economic, and political aspects.

Differences

There are evidently more points of divergence amongst the cases than there are commonalities. Of these divergences, the way that the projects were started, as the case histories show, stands out. Among the most prominent differences is the fact that of the four cases, two, the multipurpose and the chicken-raising projects, have received external financial assistance, whereas the other two did not. For those that received financial assistance, there has also been extensive contact with external institutions. Most of this has been in the form of education and training that exposed the members to new forms of information, ideas, and attitudes. Of course, the dairy-farming project too received structured training, but not as extensively as the multipurpose case especially, both of which are registered cooperatives; whereas the mutual-benefit funeral society received no such training. The funded projects also have had external contact beyond the local government training institutions. They have had contact with international bodies, as

would be expected. Of the funded projects, the multipurpose case received assistance of a material nature, such as chickens and garden tools, from three other agencies.

The status of "registered cooperatives" for the multipurpose and the dairy-farming groups gives them a legal status, but this also gives them a certain degree of subordination to a higher institutional body such as the Lesotho Cooperative and Credit Union League (LCCUL). This is the national cooperative umbrella body. On the other hand, the unregistered groups derive their legitimacy locally, which in the researcher's view makes them comparatively more decentralised and less exposed to the paternalistic tendencies of the macro system. Their relations with the central power structure are different. For example, unlike the registered groups, they cannot be collectively sued in a court of law, nor are they answerable to central government in any direct way. Although this may be a positive thing in some instances, it can also be a negative factor in others, as will be demonstrated later in the analysis.

Three of the four cases (the multipurpose, funeral, and chicken raising) also have a loan or credit component, with the multipurpose and chicken-raising groups using a revolving-fund strategy. The credit component of the funeral society is not as formal and defined, and it is limited to specific areas of need, which are paying school fees and buying school uniforms. The projects also differ in the area of membership in terms of size and physical coverage. The memberships of the multipurpose group and the funeral society are comparatively larger. These two cases also draw their membership from several villages, whereas the dairy-farming and chicken-raising groups are specific to single village units. Three cases (the multipurpose, funeral, and chicken raising) have almost 100% female membership, whereas membership for the dairy keepers is rather hard to explain. In this case the membership is unique in the sense that it is assigned per family, so that both women and their husbands are project members; hence there are 20 members from 10 families. In terms of daily participation, women take care of the cows while their husbands are away in the mines. But in terms of ownership, culturally a woman would not claim ownership of a cow while her husband is still alive and living with her; therefore, the men are the official owners of the cows and members of the project, but in absentia. In this sense membership in this group is complex and has several interplaying variables. To a significant degree, these factors impact either positively or negatively on the way the project is managed. With this arrangement, women could vote and make decisions on behalf of their absent husbands, but these decisions would still need to be sanctioned by the husbands when they come home.

The cases also differ significantly, though not drastically, in terms of the types of activities in which they engage to address their members' needs. For example, each group engages or aims at engaging in one dominant activity, which helps it to be more focused. However, in the multipurpose cooperative more than one activity would take place, and the funeral society introduced a loan feature to address an emergent area of need. For the 12 years of the multipurpose project's life, poultry keeping has been a dominant activity, whereas with the other components very little is going on.

The funeral society is unique in the sense that what it does is not a productive activity in a strict sense. Therefore, its members do not seem to experience the role conflicts that are experienced by women in the other cases, because this activity does not place conflicting demands on its members, nor does it take them from home for extended periods. What this project provides for its members is only a service, which is a significant deviation from the typical women's activities in the other cases where service provision is only a "byproduct" of their work. The uniqueness of this case makes it particularly useful for purposes of a comparative analysis. For example, membership in this case is similar to that of the dairy keepers in terms of who is an officially registered member, which in both cases is the heads of the households. However, possibly because there is no production, ownership, or use of fixed assets such as land, the women in the funeral society seem to enjoy more freedom in their participation in the decision-making processes than those in the dairy-farming cooperative do. In the multipurpose and the chicken-raising cases, one of the major activities has been construction of the physical infrastructure, chicken houses, an office, and a community-owned chicken house, respectively. In the other projects (the funeral society and dairy keepers), this feature does not exist. Therefore, for the projects that had to build, this meant additional tasks, costs, and organizational responsibilities.

Interesting too in this analysis are the groups' internal relationships, but, most importantly, their relationships to the means of production. Each group has a different type of relationship, especially regarding land, which to a certain extent determines the groups' relationships with the local authorities. For example, the multipurpose and the chicken-raising cases had sites allocated to them by the chief, whereas the dairy group, in which the productive units were to be individually owned but cooperatively managed, had no communal labour or land issues. In the funeral society, which has no productive unit, the means of production, collective ownership, labour, and profit are not issues of concern.

The internal relationships in the projects seem to have had a bearing on the project management; evidently, there were some variations in the dynamics of these relationships which were a product of differences in individual personalities, roles, class, status, age, gender, and perceptions of people about change, self, development, the country, and the rest of the world. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is only an indicator of the variables at play. Perhaps it is the nature of each combination of variables and the way that they interact that contributes to project sustainability or project collapse; we cannot say at this point.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Investigated in this study was the low rate of sustainability in rural-Lesotho women's development projects, associations, groups, and organisations. Of special interest were factors that might contribute to project sustainability, with particular reference to organisational styles employed in carrying out the projects.

Central to the concept of project sustainability as applied in this research is the idea of the long-term benefits of the project for those it is to serve. Project sustainability is closely associated with project success (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985). The addition of the suffix *self* to sustenance implies reliance to a greater extent on local resources to implement the project and keep the benefits flowing. For projects that have relied on external resources at their initial stages, interest goes beyond what happened in the project to what happened after the financial or technical "push" had been terminated.

Where the project displays the outlined characteristics of a sustained project, interest was on what organisational and management strategies were employed to achieve the result and what constraints might pose as threats. Many and varied theories have been advanced in the literature to explain the factors that may enhance or act against project sustainability. Explored in an extensive way in this research is the theory that links organisational and management styles to project performance and sustainability. Covered in the exploration of this theory in this analysis are clusters of issues and themes that emanate from the data. These include the broad areas of local action and participation, bureaucracy, power and authority, human and material resources management, institutional and structural factors, and the project context with its socioeconomic and political aspects. These are all very broad issues that interplay in a way that leads us to conclude that only clusters of elements and not a single factor can be used to account for project sustainability. The following analysis will address the

apparent linkages between the areas mentioned above and project performance in the context of Lesotho through the four cases in this study, and will also address the way that the linkages relate to the research question.

Project Organisation and Management

Local Action and Participation

Evidence in the data suggests that project sustainability is at issue in rural Basotho women's development projects. Using the commonly applied quantitative measures for project performance, such as rates of production and indicators for income levels, as well as more qualitative indicators, such as people's perception of their levels of participation, attitudes, and development of social skills, the multipurpose group and the funeral society have been sustainable in comparative terms. For the past 12 years and close to 8 years, respectively, the benefits of these projects have continued to flow to some of the members of these projects. Why the benefits have not accrued to all members is a tactical issue that relates to the way that the project resources were allocated and managed. For example, in the multipurpose cooperative some members for various reasons did not borrow from the project; for them the quantifiable benefits have not been enjoyed. This does not mean, however, that they have been excluded from the nonquantifiable benefits such as education, skills training, and information accessing. For the funeral society, it is simple: The members who have not enjoyed the specific material benefits are those who have not had a death in their families. However, in both cases the benefits continue to be potentially available to the members.

Before linkages can be traced between local action and project sustainability, a conceptual framework for local participation and action needs to be developed. Participation is currently one of the dominant development paradigms (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985), and it is said to enhance effective local action. In the context of the four cases, the local people participated in various ways. Such action is upheld and encouraged. Some authors have viewed local action and participation as among the key prerequisites for development because they are about mobilisation of resources, both human and material. For all of these cases, human resources were mobilised when people came together and decided to take action to address an issue. The human resources that existed were also enhanced through education and project experiences. The difference lies only in the degree of efficiency with which this mobilisation was carried out.

Participation also involves democratic processes, because in fact development is not only about making resources available (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985). As well, cooperative work of the nature in which project members engage seems an ideal organ for democracy in its organisation and management, and in terms of using democratic principles such as voting to guide their operations (Esman & Uphoff, 1984). As local-level decentralised organisations, these groups are accountable to their members whose individual and collective interests they also represent. According to Esman and Uphoff, they can be viewed as intermediary institutions that are also active extensions of the community rather than of the central government.

In all of the cases, once the idea of collectively addressing a situation was established, members participated in different ways and at different levels. Participation in the context of this research (as was mentioned in the preliminary analysis for the chicken-raising project) is viewed in two senses: participation in decision making and in economic and material terms. However, opportunities for members of the projects to participate in the decision-making processes seem to have differed. If this concept is further applied in a generic sense to entail people having influence over decisions, the management of their affairs, participation in productive activities, and the distribution of benefits, then, on the whole, participation existed to a great extent in all of the cases. However, we also need to note that participation in projects occurs at varying levels. In this analysis a special focus is made on participation at the institutional levels and within the individual projects, because development decisions are made at various levels.

Decisions made about tasks to be performed are at the project level. Loans are given, conflicts resolved, rules amended, and training and technical advice sought. Whether or not done independently, all of these are achieved through a complex process of information seeking and giving, which is potentially empowering. Communication plays an important role in making decisions about strategies to be employed to meet the expressed needs. In the process, an equally complex net of socioeconomic relations also developed. Data indicate, too, that there are varied forms of interaction in all the cases. The dynamics of the interaction will form a good part of this analysis, particularly when the discussions address human-resources management as a major aspect of the organisational and management styles used in these cases.

The interaction in the projects gives the participating members exposure to new ideas, new patterns of association, and new experiences that they have constantly described as *learning*. Therefore, in this context participation seems to have had elements of enhancing local capacities, both individual and institutional. However,

evidence in the data also suggests that at institutional and internal project levels, this participation has been unequal. In the projects which have more hierarchical structures (the multipurpose and chicken raising), that is, projects which have been implemented in close collaboration with the central system, participation seems to have been even more unequal. The committees have shouldered most of the decision-making responsibility and have been expected to do so by the members and the supervising agents. In these projects too, the rules that guide some of the activities, such as how to conduct a revolving fund, have been instigated by the centre. Therefore, the projects, as local organisations that are ideally separate from the organs of the state (Esman & Uphoff, 1984, p. 18), have been left out in the decision making; and yet, through the cooperative laws, these projects have become part of the bureaucratic system.

At this juncture bureaucracy, which is a male-defined notion, deserves particular attention. Bureaucracy is part of modernisation and contributes to social inequality (Scott, 1995) by upholding hierarchy and the typically masculine concepts of objective relations, competition, and achievement (Ackelsberg; cited in Bookman and Morgen, 1988). In contrast, in the cases studied in this thesis, women's organisational styles have shown a slant towards a nonbureaucratic vision of collective activity. Some authors have argued that for women such vision is embedded in women's role in the family, where their experiences as caregivers have had no room for bureaucracy (Ferguson; cited in Staudt, 1990; Scott, 1995).

Opinion is strong that in fact it has been the inability of women to separate their strategies for coping with subordination in the family from strategies that they adopt to deal with power and control in the male-dominated bureaucratic structures that has made it difficult for them to sustain their struggle for equality and empowerment. This has, in turn, as the data show, contributed to their allowing their organisations to be bureaucratised, ceasing to be representative of their constituents, and receiving but little recognition (Staudt, 1990). The multipurpose case more than the others seems to fit this description quite closely.

On material and financial participation, differences also seem to exist amongst the projects in terms of levels of participation. Financial participation entails contribution and control over the use and allocation of resources. In the multipurpose case and the chicken-raising group, the disbursements have been made mainly by the executive committees, using procedures stipulated by principles that guide revolving funds. In the same projects the members committed very little of their individual or collective funds to the projects simply because they had received external financial assistance or collective

funds for the projects. The members interviewed in this research expressed concerns about the low levels of commitment to the projects (which they say often accompanies this noncontribution of personal resources): *"Motho ha ore ke matla aka ana."* This means that when things do not seem to work out in a project where people did not contribute funds, the usual response is less alarm because people do not feel that they personally have anything at stake (as in the multipurpose case). In the case of the chicken-raising project, a committee member urged people to repay their loans. It was said that the speaker had sarcastically said that she was surprised at how committed the bookkeeper was to the repayment of the money, as if she had ever given birth to an American. This implies that if the funds had been received from local sources, the urge to pay would have been different. Mainstream development theory, with its emphasis on sustainable development, posits that because development cannot be a dictated process, resources to sponsor it must also be mainly from local sources (Esman, 1991; Korten & Alfonso, 1993).

Commitment, which implies sustained positive responses to a project as articulated by the participants, is an important aspect of project-implementation practices. It can be indicated by the deliberate contribution of resources, as mentioned earlier. However, it can also be shown by applying resources to obtain sustained socioeconomic improvements. In the context of the projects, the resources are the people, the funds, land, and other material objects. People have to work on these to convert them into project benefits. Their lack of commitment can be indicated by their unpreparedness at different points in the life of the project to commit their energies to converting the available resources into benefits. This has been articulated as a problem in the data for all of the cases. Across the cases, some project members failed to attend meetings and contribute their ideas. They did not work hard at the project site, where there was one, or they did not come to work at all. An attempt to understand why this was the case points to several factors that will be addressed in subsequent sections that look at the role of women in the family and in development in general. Some of the members who held loans were not paying them back; and, at worst, members dropped out of the project. A combination of these in one project makes the project run the risk of failing to meet its objectives and subsequent collapse. Opinion is strong that there is a certain linkage between commitment to the project and the degree of participation that those involved had in making decisions pertaining to the project. In some participants' view, such poor participation levels could be directly linked with the gendered system of division of labour in the household.

Even though correlations are hard to make in this context, it is evident that, conceptually, a sequence of elements that have to be present if a project is to continue can be identified. In all the cases, the objectives were set, resources mobilised, objectives met or not met, and the project either continued to benefit its members or did not. All of these centre around participants' initiative and behaviour in pursuing their interests. A variety of factors has been given in the data as contributory to a lack of commitment. Apart from the financial aspects of participation, as discussed above, voluntarism was singled out more prominently in the multipurpose and the chicken-raising projects, and only casually in the funeral society.

Voluntaristic mechanisms rely on people's sense of interest in the project and their value for compliance and participation (Esman & Uphoff, 1984, p. 19). Although these mechanisms have been appraised in the data for their lack of coercion, which makes them attractive on ethical grounds (Esman & Uphoff, 1984), in the context of these types of development projects, they also seem to be full of contradictions in practice. The core of these contradictions is the fact that project members who can volunteer their efforts to the projects also have strategic and practical needs that they expect to meet through the same projects. For example, the members are expected to volunteer their labour long before the project benefits can be enjoyed. To them this is quite contradictory in a world where both labour and knowledge have become commodities.

This dilemma was articulated in the multipurpose cooperative, where repeated reference was made to the expectation that people in these groups are to share knowledge and skills freely with other members. In other words, they are expected to train others freely while they themselves (the trainers) have acquired the skills; for example, in sewing, by paying for their acquisition at a skills-training centre. This concern shows people's awareness that they are caught between satisfying their individual needs and that of the group, which is its survival. Whichever decision a member caught up in this situation makes, she either loses by working in the group with no incentive or by leaving the group to work individually and decreasing the group's chances of survival by dropping out. An expression of this dilemma also indicates the realisation that, once a member of these projects, a person becomes part of a larger whole, and as such her interests and actions are an integral part of the whole.

The members pointed out in their discussion that this is a new kind of problem that they face with voluntarism because situations have changed. In the past when there was little pay to go with acquisition of knowledge applied in these types of collective action, it was easier to pass on the knowledge to others. However, at the present time it does

not make sense. The struggle here seems to be between a desire to perpetuate a value that has worked—collective action through voluntary participation—and a response to a practical situation—socioeconomic need. Reconciling the two in these cases seems to have been problematic.

A further paradox is experienced by those who manage the groups which were described earlier as using organisational styles that are guided by the fundamental principles of democracy. The committee members said that, although they are expected to oversee the active participation of members in project activities, they lack the mandate and legitimacy to coerce. Member's autonomy is to be respected, and top-down management approaches are not workable because the implementing structures are flatter, and the power and authority lines are not distinct.

It can be concluded from the foregoing analysis of voluntarism as a factor in people's participation in collective work that the real problem lies with what takes priority—social development, which is fostering democratic processes, or economic interests, which in this instance is meeting the members' practical economic needs. If a holistic view is taken of the process of development (an ideal upheld by current development theory), then the only issue would be how to strike a balance between the two; that is, between social and economic development. It seems clear that achieving this balance both in theory and in practice cannot be incidental but has to be a deliberate goal of projects such as those being studied here. This suggests a need for reorientation in thinking about development and a need for a change in attitudes about what development should achieve for those involved.

Resources Management

Management is used in this analysis in a broad sense to denote the processes by which both technical and social control mechanisms and functions have been performed in the projects in relation to human and material resources. In the context of this study, many elements combine to form this aspect of the project's life. Availability of resources is one of the key elements, as are the nature and sources of the resources. Questions of how many resources are available and who provides them are pertinent if how the resources are utilised is to be better understood.

Material resources in any project are financial; physical infrastructural, such as services; institutional; and market forces. Communication systems and informational networks are nonmaterial resources. Included in this category too are people, their

labour, and the relations amongst them. They would also entail training and education or technical skills and advice, as well as methods and the delivery system. Here too the nature and availability of these is important for project performance.

Material Resources Management

The notion of the importance of the management dimensions of development (Esman, 1991) is well established. The dictionary meaning of *management* has connotations of direction, administration, and control of resources. In a broad sociological sense, discussions of management have centred around its conception in relation to managers as an elite social grouping, or in terms of the nature of the social relationships immanent in the hierarchies of the management enterprise. Also, management has been conceived in terms of a process that has technical and social control functions (Abercrombie et al., 1984). In this analysis management is used in this broad sense but with special reference to efficiency in the use of resources and the application of management styles that can enhance performance, because current development theory continues to tie efficient utilisation of resources, both human and material, to well-developed human and institutional capacities. Who defines efficiency is also very much at issue in this context.

A key point in these theories is that human-resource development must precede resource management in organisations and in development programs. Data presented for the cases help us direct the analysis to answer questions about how resources have been used in this context and also to evaluate if how they have been managed was effective. On the basis of those answers, we can conclude whether or not how the resources were managed had any impact on the performance of individual projects. Focusing on the availability of material resources first—which were funds, land, natural resources, and physical facilities where there were any—it is clear that there were resources involved in all the projects. On the whole, the projects had different types of resources in different amounts; that is, qualities and quantities. The multipurpose cooperative had at its disposal a sum of R40,000 provided by an international development agency, and the chicken-raising group had R14,000 also provided by a development agency. The funeral society had R16,000 mainly from local sources through the project members, whereas the dairy-farming cooperative had almost no resources of a financial nature at the time of research.

The multipurpose group had a communally owned piece of land on which they have built an office and storage place for the project inputs, as had the chicken-raising group. The funeral society and the dairy group had no land issues in their groups. This was because, in the dairy case, production was going to take place at the homes of members, whereas the funeral society had no production in the strict sense. In all of the cases, including the dairy group (which had very limited resources), resources were managed in varying and sometimes similar ways by individuals or a group of individuals in varying capacities. Choices were made about who would have access and control over which resources. For example, in the multipurpose group and the funeral society, the funds were accessed from the banks by the committee members who also had almost absolute control over the allocation of these funds guided by set regulations.

The difference between the type of control in the two cases, however, lies in the fact that for the multipurpose group the control did not lie solely with the committee. Resource-utilisation strategies had to be within the stipulations of the funding agency and the Lesotho Cooperative Credit Union League. For example, the funds had been given to the group through the Ministry of Agriculture, and their use was monitored by the staff in the ministry, whereas the Credit Union League was to be responsible for the financial statements according to its system. But for the funeral society the committee accessed the funds, but it was directly accountable to the rest of the membership for the use of the funds. Therefore, in comparing the two cases one would say that the control and line of accountability for the financial resources were vertical within a specific power structure for the multipurpose cooperative and more horizontal for the funeral society.

The system of financial management for the chicken-raising group was more or less the same as that of the multipurpose group, but with a sponsoring agency playing a more dominant role in accessing the funds through its personnel, who also did all the paper work relating to the funds as well as purchasing inputs for the project. The committee performed some functions that related to the funds once the project had started, but on the whole, the financial decisions in this case were predominantly donor decisions and as such were quite centralised. For the dairy group the small funds that had been collected were used up even before the project implementation. It seems, though, that they had been controlled by the group even though how they had been utilised had been influenced by factors external to the group. For example, the members said that they had used up their funds in looking for information about the dairy cows that the prospective donor would buy for them.

For both of the cases (the multipurpose and the chicken raising) that had land (which in this country is allocated by the local chief), it is apparent that for this reason their level of interaction with this local authority was higher than for the dairy and funeral projects. Such interaction would further legitimise the activity in the eyes of local observers. However, in both cases the interaction was not extensive beyond land allocation. In fact, for the multipurpose group an interview with the village chief showed that she knew very little about the details of the project. She had not been involved in any direct way in project issues beyond performing ceremonial functions for them. This could be because some of her functions, such as intervention when there is a conflict, have been taken over by the central system; that is, LCCUL or the extension staff. On the other hand, in the chicken growers' project, during the two years of activity the local chief had been involved in trying to settle their disputes only about twice during the initial stages, as well as when some portion of the project funds was handed over to him at the end of the project.

The foregoing analysis indicates that in all the cases except for the dairy project, attempts were made to achieve a mix between centralised and participatory resource-management practices. However, each situation was different, with a clear slant toward centralised strategies in the multipurpose project and the chicken growers' project, a near-total participatory approach in the funeral society, and a difficult-to-explain strategy in the dairy group, where the would-be donors participated partly in some of the decisions about the use of resources.

Still related to financial-resource management, the multipurpose and chicken-raising projects had to deal with loans as a major feature, though in drastically different ways. In the multipurpose group, members had borrowed individually, whereas in the chicken-raising group the loan feature was even more complex because the 15 women had borrowed collectively from a supposed village fund. Because a loan element had just been introduced in the funeral society for school fees and uniforms other than for funeral requirements, there were no specific observations and comments in that connection. However, the multipurpose project and the chicken-raising project both had experienced difficulties in managing the loan component, with slow rates of repayment for the multipurpose and total nonpayment for the chicken group. Clearly compounding the problem for the chicken-raising group was the notion of collective borrowing (which is a completely new idea, according to the members), because with this new method, it seems to have been difficult to decide who to hold responsible. This would be especially problematic because the supposed business enterprise had no legal status because it was

not a registered cooperative, and no legal action could be taken against it. One cannot help wondering if even the chief would have been able to resolve this issue.

Further problematic in the handling of the loans were cultural practices that the members articulated as entrenched. Prominent among these were gender-related issues and the concept of *Molato ha o bole,* meaning that a debt does not rot (and by implication it will always have to be paid in the long run). It is true it might not rot, but in a business activity such as what these projects were supposed to be, profits, savings, reinvestment, and the purchase of inputs are crucial. The historic practice of being responsible for debts but dealing with them without too much concern for time is contradictory to these modern business principles and requirements, and as such does not seem tenable. It leads to an unworkable balance between inputs and outputs and contributes to a diminishing resource base and subsequent project collapse; and yet it continues to be applied because the demand that loans be paid according to the rules, in the members' view, may require confrontations which might lead to uncomfortable situations and strained social relations.

The gender element in the management of resources at the individual level emerges as follows: The group members in all the cases with a loan feature are predominantly women. They joined the projects because of problems that are unique to them as women in this context, which are mainly low levels of employment and limited independent access to income. However, this otherwise basically economic need or concern has social aspects. Researchers have related the ability to earn income and contribute economically to the welfare of households in Lesotho to the improved status of women (Gay, 1982; Goebel, 1992; Hofstede, 1986).

Now, the women in all the cases (except the funeral society) articulated their problems in repaying the loans: They joined the projects and used the income generated from them in the way that they did because *"Motho o batla hore ntate le ena a khothale"* or *"Re batla ho khotsafatsa bo ntate"* or *"Re rutuoe ho sebeletsa ho khotsofatsa/They did all these things to satisfy their husbands."* It is evident that it is not only the husbands whom they have to satisfy, but also the rest of the extended family, because, as some of the individuals interviewed mentioned, it is a bad reflection on a man for his wife to be seen to be struggling to survive economically. Therefore, all concerned have to be convinced that what she is doing is truly just to supplement the husband's earnings. Otherwise, the husband might even be confronted by his parents to explain why his wife is involved in these activities, and he must be able to use some form of evidence to justify her involvement.

Although in a partnership such as marriage and family relationships there might not be anything drastically wrong with partners working to satisfy each other, the dynamics of the references that the women in these projects make are interesting in this regard: When working to please husbands has overtones of unequal power relations, as it seems in this case, then there is a problem.

Typically, a woman would borrow from the project funds with the ultimate goal of repaying the loan and independently continuing to be self-employed and to generate income to meet her individual needs and those of their families. How much she is able to save will determine very much the rate at which she will be able to repay the loan. Now the notion of "satisfying the husbands" becomes a crucial issue when it makes women run the risk of being unable to save. In both the multipurpose and chicken-raising projects, the women said that, once they had earned some income from the projects, they would purchase an important household item to prove to their families and their husbands that their participation in the projects was worthwhile. At a deeper level, from the literature it is quite apparent that women in this society are minors and economically dependent. Now, they clearly want to ensure that if for some reason or other they cannot repay the loan, at least the husbands should have been convinced that the loans were worthwhile for them to be prepared to pay on their wives' behalf. As well, this is quite relevant when one looks at the issue of which of the women have from the onset a potential to borrow. This issue will be pursued further later in the thesis. The same trend of low levels of savings and purchasing household items instead of saving was observed by individuals working with the projects as extension agents who were interviewed in this study. Obviously, when reinvestment and savings suffer, then the loans will simply not get paid.

The logic of women's reasoning is not hard to understand, however, because, as they explained, this is a society where, if the husbands are not convinced that their involvement in the projects is worthwhile, they could also simply just refuse to permit them to take part. The notion of permission by men for women to participate in activities, educational or development, is not unique to Lesotho. The literature has documented similar trends from other parts of the world. Women are well aware that this would take away their opportunities of ever breaking away from the circle of socioeconomic dependency to which a lack of employment perpetually subjects them. But men too are aware of the threat to the economic basis of their male authority (Gay, 1982, p. 52) by the economic opportunities that these projects may create for women. As Young (1993) cautioned those who advocate the empowerment approach, it is not

easy for the men in this context and elsewhere to relinquish power and its privileges. One needs to note here that this is a country where men have good employment opportunities in the mines of South Africa, and women do not. As well, it might not be too presumptuous to think that the men's involvement in highly paid labour has changed their concept of work; hence their expectations that their wives will bring some form of pay or material benefit from the projects, as they do from their work in the mines. In instances where women have access to income through their husbands' remittances, research has showed that money sent home is sporadic and usually for specific major household activities such as home construction, the purchase of furniture, or agricultural inputs (Gay, 1982), and not for the family's general, recurrent costs, which are heavily shouldered by the wives.

Gay (1982) further showed that the women have to account accurately for the money sent home when their husbands return from the mines. Not doing so could jeopardise their marriages. The data from Gay's study further point to an important dimension of resource management in projects: In addition to gender, the age of women in the projects is an important factor. First, Gay argued that, in fact, economic and technological change (in the modernising socioeconomic milieu) have increased women's dependence on men, indicating just how intertwined are gender and the two development paradigms (modernisation and development) in this context and at the local level because of the relations between external and internal macro systems. Because of the increased need for modern amenities such as an iron-sheet-roofed house, modern furniture, clothes, and different types of household items and services, women turn to men (who receive better pay from the mines) to obtain these, making marriage to a migrant the best option for a poor rural women (Goebel, 1992, p. 102). Opinion is strong that it is younger women who more strongly desire these niceties, making them more vulnerable because it is also the younger women who have limited chances of taking part in the projects, either because they still live with their in-laws and do most of the laborious and routine domestic work in those households (Gay, 1982), or they have young children who need their care and supervision and therefore need to be at home more than the older women do.

In fact, Williams (cited in Gay, 1982) observed that there is a higher dropout rate from the projects for younger women, and yet they seem to be the most in need because they still have children going to school. This assertion is supported by an observation made by the individuals interviewed in this study who said that, generally, older women and widows are more likely to stay and maintain a higher level of activity in projects

than younger women are. Gay further pointed out that for older women help from the children and daughters-in-law accounts for their having more time for leisure and participation in income-generating activities. Older women also have access to the earnings of both their husbands and their sons and can sometimes afford hired labour to do some of the household chores while they engage in income-generating activities (Gay, 1982, p. 32). Of course, if they do not have a working son or husband, older women may be in need of income; but if they are widowed, then they also will be more able to participate and freer to use their earnings as they please (Gay, 1982).

Gay's (1982) lucid findings, supported by the individuals interviewed, make relevant to our analysis the concept of life cycle as a differentiating factor for the women in this study. The application of life cycle in this context indicates that within the broad category of *women* or *gender*, gender hierarchies or strata by age, marital status, family size, and other attributes can be mapped. These seem to contribute to women's obviously differing experiences and perceptions of development. Young (1993) has argued, and the researcher concurs, that these are the differences that often make it difficult for women to form alliances to strengthen their transformative potential or to have unity of purpose (Walker, 1990).

However, this concept makes it possible at this juncture for us to apply the feminist critique that questions the category of women. This critique notes and the data from this research show that women constitute a group. However, although in certain social contexts their gender identity is sufficient to distinguish them from other like aggregates (Pellow, 1983), in others gender alone is not enough. In fact, Ostergaard (1992), in discussing how women's social situation is strongly determined within the family, argued that

> women are never simply women; they are daughters, widows, married mothers of small children, unwed mothers, wives of migrant labourers, mothers-in-law. The authority, autonomy, responsibility, obligations, and workload they have in the family vary accordingly. And so does their ability to participate in the project and the way they are affected by it. (p. 9)

It seems, then, that for the projects to have an empowering effect on women, the starting point would be to identify unifying factors that cut across the gender hierarchies and to build them into the women's design-and-development project-management strategies. These factors can be discovered through research where the reporting of findings displays no fallacies of aggregation (Kabeer, 1991), because even within the categories of *women, rural people, the household, house work, labour,* and *family,* there are actual individuals with varied needs and interests that women in this study articulated

as often conflicting. It is only through being aware of these differences that they can be taken into account in defining project sustainability and devising strategies to achieve it.

Besides these issues, the other related factor that is thematic in the area of material-resources management was the fact that the project members had to contend with forces outside their sphere of control. The most important of these were the markets and the forces that surround them in the context of Lesotho. The people had to buy inputs and sell their products. Mentioned repeatedly by the multipurpose group especially was the issue of competition with the industrial market for the sales of their products such as sewn and knitted garments. The details of the dynamics of these will be further discussed in the section that deals with the social-services structure in this country. For now, we turn to human-resources management in the projects as one of the key factors in project sustainability.

Human Resources Management

Conceptually, human resources management is about the human-resources factor in economic and social development. The fundamental premise that underlies this conception is that development is about people. From a sociological viewpoint this conception is tenable because people are the basic unit of analysis for social organisation. It is evident, however, from the development literature that the human factor historically either was entirely neglected or elicited only casual interest in development thinking and practice.

In this research and in the context of the women's development projects under review, the human factor is one of the central factors. This is a broad theme that is dealt with under equally broad thematic areas such as people, education and training, knowledge, information and communication systems, voluntarism and organisation of labour, conflict and its management, technical and institutional capacities, and how these interacted in the context of the cases. Data indicate that each of the cases had people as its key resource. However, as the group members constantly mentioned, people are different. They differ or have similarities that they brought into the projects in terms of skills, attitudes, energies, enthusiasm, and expectations. For individual members, each of these combined in different ways to make the members either assets or liabilities to the projects.

For the skilled members, such as those who knew how to knit, sew, raise chickens, or keep records, they either contributed positively (depending on their attitudes) to the

performance of the project, or they did not. If we focus on the quantity of this resource—say, in the multipurpose group and funeral society—there were more people who could contribute their energies, ideas, and competencies to the projects than in the dairy-farming and chicken-raising projects. However, perhaps quantity alone is not a good indicator. In fact, to support this view, the members in both the multipurpose and the chicken-raising projects thought that working with too many people is problematic. Commenting on what too many people is, quite interestingly, even the chicken-raising group thought that 15 people were too many. An underlying and recurrent theme regarding the number of people was the fact that too many people bring into the project too many and diverse qualities that are often conflicting. Mentioned specifically were conflicting roles, needs, desires, expectations, and levels of commitment to the projects. These concerns made conflict a prominent issue in the interviews/discussions.

The participants viewed and articulated the existence of conflict and its management and resolution in varying ways. Running through the discussions of conflict was the clear perception that such problems as high member-dropout rates, low morale for participating in the projects, antagonistic relations as a result of differences in social and economic status, and subsequent malfunctioning leading to collapse contribute a great deal to the negative dynamics in projects. The intensity with which this issue was discussed and regarded as a major factor in project performance differed, with the multipurpose and the chicken-raising project members articulating their concerns about this issue more passionately and elaborately, as this next section of the analysis indicates.

Conflict Management and Resolution

Conflict has been at the centre of social theory for a long time. Whatever form it takes, conflict is inherent in society and in groups where usually there is plurality of interests, but resources are limited (Anderson & Sharrock, 1984). The debate between the functionalists and conflict theorists about the functions that conflict serves in society continues. However, the impact of conflict in group solidarity was well conceptualised by the project members. Views differed about its causes, its magnitude, how it could be resolved, and who should be responsible for its resolution. Interesting too were the differences that the researcher observed between the members who stayed in the projects and those who dropped out in the perceptions of conflict and its role in the project. The members who remained viewed conflict as an expected part of the group work in which they were engaged. The dropouts discussed conflict with an attitude of animosity; they

expressed it with such a sense of regret that one is inclined to conclude that they viewed conflict as contributing to group disintegration, whereas their counterparts viewed it as integrative because people get to know each other better. The multipurpose group pointed out that they have differed in opinion over a number of issues and have clashed, but they have remained in the project. Among the causes of conflict, the most frequently mentioned were greed and selfishness over resources, money in particular. Mentioned too were weak human relations, individualism, and diminishing mutual love. They attributed these to change and modernity when they said that it never used to be like that. The participants said that their frequent conflictual encounters, which may be triggered, for example, by other members not wanting to account for their use of resources, brought out "sides" of people that they had never seen before. Therefore, these encounters seemed to be offering them an opportunity to get to know each other better.

It seems that competition for resources and benefits, such as securing a loan, is in this sense the core of conflict in these groups. Although in some instances the conflict was temporary and regulated—people said that they were not going to let a project interfere with their long-established relations—in other instances it was permanent or had permanent effects when people dropped out of the group and wanted never to have anything to do with it again. In other instances the conflict emanated from struggles over nonmaterial resources such as power, status, and authority, which are also related to control over resources, ideas, and decisions.

The strategies adopted to resolve the conflict differed from situation to situation. The major similarity in terms of general attitudes to conflict was anchored on the principle of *Ntoa ke ea malula 'moho,* which means that people who live together are bound to clash. This principle encourages some degree of tolerance of a conflictual situation, all in the name of peace. In the parsonic sense, conflict in these cases was restrained by a common value, peace. However, its existence indicates the pluralism and lack of homogeneity among the members which perhaps intensify as the society changes and becomes more differentiated.

In the context of these projects, although the function served by the shared value, peace, can be appraised, the data show that in other instances where a framework of rules existed but could not be applied, the conflict escalated until there were consequences such as member dropout or low morale for participating in project activities. By any standards, these are not positive indicators for the efficient use of human resources and subsequent sustenance of the projects. Discussions on how the conflict was managed always spilled over into the area of who participated in the

resolution of conflict in the projects. In all cases, the members looked up to three categories of people as being responsible: the Chiefs, the Village Development Councils (VDCs), and the project committees and members themselves. Each of these is discussed in the next section, with the chief and the VDC treated together because they serve in similar capacities as alternative sources of authority at the local level; in fact, chiefs are chairpersons of VDCs as a matter of policy.

Both chieftaincy and the VDCs are organs of governance, agents of development, and the most immediate high-level authorities at the village level. They are structurally accountable to the central power structure. Directly or indirectly, the role of these two institutions is crucial for development in Lesotho's rural settings. However, a discussion of these institutions of leadership cannot leave out the issue of effective leadership as a critical factor in the implementation and sustainability of development initiatives (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985). It was on the basis of this understanding, it seems, that project members appealed or looked up to these organisations in their management of conflict and of resources in general.

However, as Honandle and Van Sant (1985) further argued, and data from the cases also demonstrate, the leaders may lack skills to perform required organisational tasks efficiently or lack legitimacy or a proper structural framework to perform these functions. Data show that these institutions did not efficiently perform their functions in general terms, but more specifically their tasks of resolving conflicts in the projects. In surveying the problems of the general organisation of VDCs in Lesotho, the literature has revealed that in most cases the VDCs are utterly dysfunctional. Many reasons are advanced for this situation. Among these, specific mention is made of the common trend toward unfilled offices in the VDCs. Further, the VDC members do not understand their terms of reference, are incompetent, lack interest, or have poor or ambiguous relations with the central government (Thoahlane, 1984).

Thoahlane went on to explain this situation by relating it to the history of the VDC in Lesotho, which is tightly knit with the country's political history. VDCs were set up as alternative organs of authority responsible for development at the local level. However, Thoahlane's findings (1984) indicate that the VDCs were strengthened and used by the Basotho National Party (BNP) to monitor its political activities at the local level. (This is the party that ruled the country autocratically for over 25 years.) As a result of this, Thoahlane concluded, it has always been very difficult to keep party politics out of local government.

Because of the divisive nature of politics, the local people have also not been able to see the VDCs as neutral custodians of their development efforts. They lack confidence in them. It is unfortunate that this historical development has not only created problems for the VDCs, but has also tainted the image of chieftaincy as an otherwise popular historic or traditional institution of leadership. It is evident, however, that in all of the cases the people used the chiefs and the VDCs in one way or another, and in most cases people said that they had gone to either the VDC or the chief for intervention in project-related matters. For the multipurpose and the chicken-raising projects, the chiefs allocated sites for the projects, which indicates their support for the initiatives. The funeral society worked through the chief to obtain a letter that sanctioned it as a development initiative and connected it with the local banks. Both the dairy farmers and the chicken raisers had the support of the chief but did not need his intervention in a conflictual situation.

The situation of the chicken-raising project was unique in the sense that people directly related the chief's inability to help the group in its conflict management and organisational problems to his questionable status. According to the data, to a certain fraction of the village he was not the legitimate holder of the chieftaincy. This situation had not been resolved over a long period. They did not seem to blame the chief himself, but those in the upper levels of the power structures, for not resolving the issue. They obviously did not feel empowered to do anything about the issue at the village level. What this indicates is that the people had a clear conception of the power and authority structure in this context. And evidently they were capable of taking advantage of the ambiguities for the good or to the detriment of the project. This also indicates their awareness of the underdeveloped capacities of these institutions. A common saying is that people know who has power and who does not because they saw cases being reported (such as loan delinquencies) and nothing being done about them. The same kinds of problems were experienced by the project committee members, especially in this case. Seemingly, because of their lack of legal status (the chicken-raising group was not a registered cooperative), they lacked the legitimacy and mandate to act, such as to expel an uncooperative member.

In contrast, the multipurpose cooperative members repeatedly said that they knew the problematic members and how to deal with them. However, unlike this group, the funeral society committee and the rest of the membership were said to be responsible for dealing with a problematic member through extensive discussions. In this case they also explicitly said, *Matla ke a litho:* The power lies with the members through the rules they

prepared themselves. This group evidently draws its legitimacy locally and has almost nothing to do with the external or centralised power structure.

Education/Training and Communications

It should be apparent at this point that an attempt to separate the issues in the context of this research analysis is futile because they are all so intertwined. However, education and training of the kind applied in the development programmes of the nature studied here are mainly structured and institutional. They are offered to people to enhance their skills with the realisation that skills are learnt and capabilities can be developed. Therefore, education is aimed at improving the quality of labour that people bring into development initiatives. Education in general comprises knowledge, ideas, information, and the communication patterns of transmitting these, usually called *methods*. The way it is carried out implies choices about which content is relevant and which methods of delivery are most appropriate. Education and training are also about power and control over resources needed to carry out the educational programmes.

Evidence from the data suggests that education, training, and communication constituted a large part of the implementation process of all the projects. However, if we focus on the different forms of education, we discover that the funeral society did not have education of the type outlined above as its major element. Instead, it relied heavily on nonformal and informal learning strategies. Of the three remaining cases, the multipurpose cooperative seems to be the case that was extensively exposed to this training—enough for them to boast of being "fully baked" compared to other groups. They were not only offered educational programs, but also had the opportunity to apply the skills learned, such as keeping their financial records and sending a quarterly financial statement to LCCUL. This was observed from their records.

In contrast, the chicken-raising project does not seem to have had a similar experience. Apart from the training away from the village, this group mentioned training in leadership and basic cooperative principles. They also made a specific mention of contact with the nutrition officer over an extended period of time. However, apart from these, they do not seem to have had contact with any of the other extension staff in the region, indicating the limited access to extension services that this group experienced. This is documented as a problem unique not only to this group, but also to other groups and individual women farmers in Lesotho and other parts of the developing world (FAO, 1985). In their words, it all happened so fast; and, like the dairy farmers, they did not

even have a chance to apply properly the few skills that they had before they were caught up in the dependency web, with most of the information seeking, communications, and purchases done for them. This deprived them of the exposure and networking capabilities that the multipurpose members display, and it also minimised their chances of independently learning how to manage project affairs. Members of the multipurpose cooperative said with a certain degree of confidence that they knew where to go to look for services, ideas, and support.

Whereas mainstream development theory and practice emphasise education of the type discussed above, it is evident from the data that people recognise the importance of experiential learning (in the broad sense) to the lives of their projects. They all expressed this realisation by repeatedly referring to their experiences in the projects, both the pleasant and the unpleasant ones, as "learning," perhaps because this is the type of learning strategy to which they are commonly exposed. This seems to indicate that in their view experience is a good teacher. Explaining how they learned, for example, about how difficult working cooperatively can be, they said that *"Ho tseba tsietsi ke ho feta pela eona"* or *"Sethoto se hlalefa ke ho utloa bohloko."* Both of these sayings are basically pointing to the fact that to understand, appreciate, and learn from a situation, one must have been in it. This principle does not seem to be put forward in this context with the intention of undermining the institutionalised forms of learning. Instead, it underlines the value attached to experiential learning, which by its nature is situation specific, locally based, and informally delivered and applied in nature. The overall conception of education and training or access to information in the projects is that it is a means to tangible and intangible attributes, such as increased participation or improved levels of productivity. With this conception the participants constantly said, "If we had known, things would not have been the way they are now, but we know better now," which seems to imply that because they have experienced the situation, they have also learned from it.

It is evident from the data too that part of "knowing" is access to information which is available through specific communication channels, both internal and external. The situation in this regard differed from case to case. For the multipurpose group, except for the instance where the members still had reservations about the exact amount of money that they were granted, communication and access to information did not emerge as a problem. In the funeral society also, with its "open-door-policy" kind of management, access to information within the project did not seem to be a problem. However, this group seems to have a very limited area of interaction with the outside

world. Only a few times was reference made to people having learned from other groups that engage in similar types of activities. The dairy-farming project members extensively articulated limited access to information. They felt that information was not only inaccessible, but it was also often inadequate, unreliable, and contradictory. Their experiences with the Agricultural Development Bank and the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre left them lacking confidence in those who had knowledge and information. The chicken-raising group, referred to as the less exposed case, had limited access to information of the type that these other groups had. Incidentally, this is also the project that is farthest away from the capital city, which is the centre of the social services infrastructure, whereas the multipurpose project is the closest.

In all of the cases except the funeral society, discussion of communications seems to point to communication as a one-way process in which the project members were to receive the information. In very few occasions was reference made to the fact that the groups could have been the ones to communicate information with the central system. Even within the internal-project system, the committees were frequently accused of not adequately communicating with the rest of the membership. Yet in development, for communication management to be empowering it has to be dialogical. People in these cases might conceptualise communication the way they do because it seems to be a power tool through which those with legitimacy are on the dispatching end, and those with less power are continually receiving.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sustainability of rural Basotho women's small-scale development-oriented projects, groups, associations, or organisations was the principal concern of this research. As the data from the four cases indicate, to design efficient development-management strategies that would foster sustainable programs is a formidable task. Rural-induced change (Moris, 1985) is a management-intensive process that demands a careful selection of micro-level processes that will ensure the viability of macro-level strategies (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985, p. 15).

In the context of Lesotho, attempts to achieve this goal in relation to rural women's development have been lethargic and have yielded limited results. The problems that surround this issue are complex and not well defined in this country. Lesotho advocates some form of decentralisation of its development-management processes (NDP, 1994). However, the practical application of this ideal, as the data indicate, proves problematic. Decisions that pertain to projects in which the government was involved were centralised, in part because this government, like governments in most countries of the developing world, has inherited bureaucratic structures and outlooks from their colonial masters (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985). Conversely, it has also been reiterated by many authors that decentralisation is not a panacea for efficient development management because development problems emanate from the interaction of a multiplicity of socioeconomic and political factors, a finding supported by this research.

It is evident from the data that some projects could be said to be sustainable in terms of criteria developed and applied in this study. These are the multipurpose and the funeral society projects. The members of these cases have continued to enjoy project benefits over a sustained period of time. One of the criteria for sustainability, which is a long-term commitment, is also evident in the project because some members have expressed it and the records show their involvement in attempts to meet project goals. These are the members who have also provided local leadership skills so that the multipurpose project does not depend entirely on the input of outside technical stuff. Ironically, the two projects, the multipurpose group and the funeral society, are radically different in organisational terms.

The multipurpose registered cooperative has enjoyed the benefits of a generous financial-assistance program. The members of this project received relatively more

extensive exposure to training than those of the other projects did. In contrast, the funeral society is a single-purpose group with no production activity which also has received virtually no contact with formalised modern forms of knowledge and information that are offered by training institutions. From these cases one can conclude that it would be difficult to pick one aspect of either of the projects and hold it responsible for the project's sustainability. Instead, a focus on a combination of factors would be a more tenable approach. This is the approach that needs to be adopted at the project-planning stage and throughout the project cycle. Based on this observation, conclusions and implications regarding ideas that have emerged as thematic in this study are made in areas pertinent to the research question: education, organisational issues, sociocultural factors, and gender-related issues. Each of these will be discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Educational Implications

Evidence from the data on the multipurpose group suggests that in this project, although local knowledge forms continued to be applied, on the basis of the members' recognition that knowledge can be obsolete, the need for sustained human capacity building was fully recognised. This is not always the case in development projects (Korten & Alfonso, 1983). The chicken-raising project supports this observation. Generally, education and training are a major part of the social infrastructure that state intervention facilitated in three of the cases (the multipurpose, the chicken raising, and the dairy-farming cooperative). However, the data indicate that this infrastructure was quite centralised. Emphasis at a theoretical and a practical level was on structured learning processes. Structured learning processes emanate from educational programmes that are based on technocratic models. In fact, Freire (1992, p. 175) has argued quite vehemently in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that education is part of the superstructure, which is why he said that it would be impossible for the educational elites to organise and plan or reform education with the aim of laying open to question the essence of the social system in which they are the key beneficiary. As such, they will continue to organise educational programs such as those used in these projects which lack an element of freedom for the learners to think critically or evaluate their everyday experiences on their own account (Collins, 1991). Critical-thinking skills would enable women to challenge the structures that are the agents of their subordination. Most authors noted, and the researcher concurs, that this would be a very slow process because it would comprise questioning the culture and using education as a means and a strategy to address

the specific intersections of gender relations with those of class, race, or even religion and the overall value system (Walters, 1990, p. 1). Walters further cautioned that this process would spill over to the state at the political level because most of the issues of women's status are underpinned by economic and political structures at that level. The data show that the sharing of the power that surrounds the delivery systems of this educational infrastructure seems to have been limited. To reiterate Collins' concern, how can a discourse in which the viewpoints of all concerned are not taken into account be a rational discourse? Instead, such discourse only serves to reinforce the manipulative and controlling effects of the technocratic system.

The project members went away to the training centres for skills-training courses, workshops, and seminars. Conditions at these centres are usually too far removed from the local realities. For example, in some, resources such as water might be abundant (for training in agricultural production such as poultry keeping, vegetable growing, and dairy production), but when the participants go back to their villages, such resources are rarely adequate. Women trainees reported that tasks were easier to perform at the training centres because there they were removed from their household responsibilities and they could perform the functions easily. When they returned home, the real situation was different, and conditions were more difficult to handle.

When the training took place locally, the trainers came from different government or other institutional bodies. The project members' participation in the design of the training programs, as they described it, was in the form of "shopping lists," with the actual content being decided upon largely by the trainers. The trainers were part of the central system which also controls the financial resources (in the multipurpose, dairy, and chicken-raising projects) as well as the knowledge forms, including the meaning and definitions of *development* and *sustainability*. This is contrary to the principles of participatory educational approaches and makes educational processes and the accompanying creative capacities a monopoly of those designated trainers and the institutions that they serve. In Collins' (1991) view, the legitimation and institutionalisation of these educational processes through mechanisms such as curriculum or certification or "registration as a cooperative under the cooperative law, in this case, *only* serves to give society assurance as to the quality of the services" (p. 16; emphasis added). No doubt the training improved the multipurpose project members' technical skills, enhanced their level of confidence, and decreased their levels of dependency on external sources for the internal day-to-day management of their project. One member indicated that, besides acquiring these specific skills, she was grateful that she

strengthened her interpersonal skills: *"Ke ithutile ho kopana le lichaba tse ling."* In the researcher's view, this is a strong indication of this participant's broader perception of what the goal of development should be; that is, developing the whole person. This suggests an integrated approach where the social aspects of these projects are just as important as the economic. Yet development planners continue to adopt a piecemeal and compartmentalised approach to project planning (Kabeer, 1991). Once the projects are designated *income generating* (the multipurpose and the chicken rearing), they narrowly focus more on the single aspect, income, as if income is the only aspect of people's lives that matters. In contrast, the chicken-raising group members lacked the confidence and sense of worth expressed by the multipurpose group members. They said that they did not suggest, for example, how funds should be used in the project because they were being told about these things by people who knew more. This is an indication of their doubts about their knowledge forms and the subsequent resolution to listen to those who "know." This also reveals some elements of unequal power relations because, ideally, people have a choice about to whom to listen. In this case those who had the presumed knowledge also had the legitimate power to tell the members what to do.

However, there is no evidence in the data to suggest that this training had any elements, such as critical awareness and reflection, which would lead to empowerment. Nor is there an indication of reliance on local sources of knowledge in any conscious way. Instead, the predominant approach was to place all the responsibility for training on the experts. This approach seems to fit Freire's (1993, p. 133) notion of cultural invasion through education whereby the invaders—in this case the educational planners and extension educators as agents of the state—penetrate the cultural context of another group, disrespecting the latter's potential and imposing their views on those they invade—in this case the project members. Freire argued—the researcher concurs, and this is supported by the data—that when this happens, the creative capacities of the invaded are inhibited, resulting in cultural inauthenticity. In the view of most critical educators, and in Freire's words, this is an act of violence and domination against the invaded in which the invader poses as a helping friend (p. 133).

This may also be described as creating a certain degree of dependency on the part of those trained in a situation where the experts are usually unfamiliar with the existing knowledge forms, and because of their lack of cross-cultural insights (Esman, 1991), they usually marginalise the indigenous knowledge forms. Marginalisation within the empowerment perspective is a form of disempowerment (Walters, 1991). As Esman further argued, this marginalisation may thwart the latent management capacities (as it

seems to have done in these projects), because theory such as development-management theory should be informed or founded on local empirical experiences. This special emphasis on knowledge and education is premised on the fact that the local resource base that is crucial for sustainable development includes indigenous technical knowledge, community folk management skills, and informal networks used to make things happen (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985, p. 90). Critical in education of all forms are the methods of delivery. There is no evidence to suggest that the indigenous methods of learning in Lesotho, such as story telling, music, poetry, and folklore, were consciously employed in the delivery of the courses' content. Project records and the members' outline of the type of content delivered indicate standardised content on bookkeeping skills, cooperative laws and leadership skills, sewing and knitting, and chicken rearing for the groups that were trained. Issues of social status and increasing differentiation, legitimacy of leadership, conflict management, loan concerns such as gender issues where heads of households (men) are members and women are instituting agents, the relation between voluntaristic mechanisms and income generation does not seem to have been a crucial part of the training content. However, in the members' perceptions these are the critical issues in the lives of projects as they experienced them.

Organisational Issues

A further examination of the implementation strategies adopted in the multipurpose cooperative reveals that a mix was attempted between the indigenous historic forms of organisation and the styles acquired through the training. For example, although the researcher observed (for the multipurpose) that the project records were relatively adequately kept, the members in their discussion indicated that they still use and will continue to rely on memory and human evidence as well as the use of nonwritten forms of communication in their project. They went on to explain that they do so because both systems have worked in a complementary fashion for them. This combination of local knowledge and modern technical knowledge is upheld as an alternative approach worthy of further exploration. The attempted mix or balance might not have been perfect in this case, but the accommodation of historic patterns of organisation in this otherwise conventional program design that would ideally cling to narrow interpretations of development and its outcomes (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985, p. 98) is a unique feature of this project. This seems to indicate that the multipurpose cooperative represents a model that could be developed further in pursuit of sustainable development in this country.

It can be mentioned at this point that each of the multipurpose group and the funeral society has unique features that could in fact have played an important role in the apparent sustainability of these projects. The contrast between these two cases is interesting; for example, the main features of the multipurpose case have been outlined as financial assistance and extensive training and education for the members, with an allowance for the adoption of historic organisational styles such as the use of oral communication and the indigenous styles of managing loans or conflict, as was described in the data. The funeral society's almost total reliance on local resources stands out. Secondly, the funeral society does not have a production feature, so it has no profit motive. A scrutiny of the structures for its management reveals that they are relatively flatter, which does not mean that they are virtuous, but that they seem to be more empowering, with the people themselves more involved at the local level in running the group. The fact that this project has not received external financial and technical assistance seems to have reduced its levels of dependency and contact with outside systems, the outside system that seemed to employ its coercive structures (Collins, 1991) to intensify the subjugation of those whom it is supposedly meant to help (the multipurpose, chicken-raising, and dairy-farming groups).

Such lack of dependency seems to have served a similar purpose to that served by education and training in the multipurpose cooperative. Both of these aspects have enhanced local participatory action. The informal management style of the funeral society has enhanced the project's higher level of flexibility; for instance, about the source of its membership or when to introduce a loan feature and how to manage it. In other words, in this group members feel empowered to make practical decisions in areas that are seemingly dominated by the professionals in the multipurpose and the chicken-raising cases. However, with the formally registered groups, the data show that membership could be drawn only from within a specified geographic area (10 km physical radius) by law. It has been observed that the 10-km radius limits membership to very few, and most likely to people relate according to the village structure in a country where most villages are *Ha Pita, Ha Motjoka,* or *Ha Tlali; Ha* denoting that the people are of *Pita* or *Motjoka* or *Tlali* lineage. If kinship plays a major role, as the data seem to indicate, in the way that group members deal with each other in the projects, it would not be presumptuous to suggest that if the radius were to be expanded, this would neutralise the kinship groupings and inject some objectivity into the organisational styles. In fact, the multipurpose focus-group participants indicated that, in dealing with people who were of a different kinship descent, from a village away from the one in which the

project was centred, they could be impersonal and do business without being too preoccupied about what would happen to the internal relations after the project session. However, it was observed in the focus-group sessions for the multipurpose project that members from other villages participated in discussions less, whereas in the funeral society a major concern regarding participation was that people from outside the area of the group participated less in the meetings and other group activities. The multipurpose group members had said earlier, too, that it was easier to deal with each other (i.e., people from the same village group) without feeling discriminated against than to deal with people from other villages. This sense of discrimination might partly explain the low level of participation by outsiders in the focus groups. These seemingly contradictory perceptions underline kinship and neighbourhood relations as issues of significant concern in social organisation, as the data indicate. On this basis, careful consideration of factors such as those beyond geography alone would be recommended as useful in project initiation and organisation.

In regard to membership and its relevance to project-organisation issues, in the funeral society families are members, with heads of households registered with the group but women participating in the actual implementation. A similar culturally informed and acceptable organisational strategy was applied in the dairy-farming cooperative. Even though it might be hard to make any correlational inferences between these cultural considerations and project sustainability, it is evident that the project members highly regarded them. They applied them in spite of their lack of conformity with standard rules of business management whereby a member or shareholder is one person and one person alone. The adopted organisational form in these cases is in line with the existing family structure in this society. To acknowledge or recognise the husband as the official member is simply to safeguard against any eventualities in which a woman as a minor cannot be held responsible for issues such as those involved in the projects; for example, ownership of fixed property or the signing of contracts.

Sociocultural Factors

Relevant too in the area of project-resources management is the fact that projects that were not sustained collapsed because of the dwindling of their resource base. Most of the money especially went into loans. An assessment of how a loan is perceived and managed in this culture indicates that a loan is a lifelong contract and that it is with this understanding that members take loans. Obviously, this is contrary to the rules of

modern business management. The kinship factor surfaced again when the participants indicated that in most cases it is not easy to confront a relative or even a neighbour about a loan because that person will be needed for support in other aspects of life in the family or the community. In fact, one comment was that "long-term indebtedness only works to strengthen the social relations among people"; hence, *Monyala ka peli o nyala oa hae,* which was earlier translated to mean that even if a daughter marrying a man from another family who does not have enough cattle to pay *lobola,* she is still free to marry because in the future it probably will be the daughter's family wanting to marry into her husband's family, and they would expect similar leeway. Marriage is viewed as an alliance between two kinship groups for the purpose of realising goals beyond the interests of the particular husband and wife (Nhlapo; cited in Bazilli, 1991, p. 113). Nhlapo further explained that this broader conception of marriage does not mean that the two parties in a marriage are not important, but it implies that they are only at the point at which the two families, lineages, or clans are joined for purposes which have wider community significance (p. 113).

The underlying principle here too seems to be the concept of collective reciprocity as articulated in functionalism and exchange theory. When reciprocity does not exist, then the social actors might withdraw from the interaction that they deem unrewarding (Abercrombie et al., 1984). The same reservations about confrontations were expressed in the area of conflict resolution not only in the projects, but also in other day-to-day encounters. In discussing the fact that people do not often come forth when there is a problem because they wish to avoid confrontation, one member pointed out that people have reasons to decide not to talk. One of these reasons, according to her, is that people first think about the possible reactions of those at fault. There is evidence (within the symbolic interactionist school of thought) that human beings attach meanings to their actions as well as to the possible interpretations of their actions by those with whom they interact. On the basis of the anticipated reaction, the decision in this case is to choose not to complain. The anticipation is based on the potential complainant's knowledge. This view is supported by a comment made by one member who followed up the comment about choosing not to complain: "Yes, people have seen situations where one person would complain and a conflictual situation arises, and then this was followed by others saying, 'This is exactly why I did not want to bring the issue up.'" Therefore, the member's decision to act in a certain way in this case is based on her past experiences on which she reflects, making her subsequent action intentional. Opinion was strong too that, culturally, *"Ntoa ke ea malula moho/*People living together are

bound to fight." This is a control mechanism which leads to those involved in resolving the conflicts not taking any final decisions, such as expelling a member who owed too much to the project, because the people in this culture seem to organise their activities on the basis of lifelong associations. The treatment of loans in the projects and in other activities bears evidence for this. This needs to be taken into account in project planning and management.

For the chicken-raising group, flexibility regarding membership (15 people, which the members thought was too many for communal ownership) was limited by the cooperative laws which stipulate that there must be at least 10 people working together before a group can be considered for registration as a cooperative. In comparison, evidently there is less dogma with which to contend in the funeral society. This case displays organisational forms that empirically sociologically are organic, because the members maximise personal discretion and minimise strict, rule-bound behaviour (Abercrombie et al., 1984).

This obvious upholding of the funeral-society model is not by any means within the neoliberal "let us do away with the state" approach or conception of development management, because opinion is still strong that we need the state in spite of all the criticisms that have been levelled against it. Instead, the upholding is indicative of a call for practical approaches to practical situations, especially in the context of a poor country such as Lesotho where the relative privileges that the multipurpose cooperative seems to have enjoyed are seldom available. Funds are almost always never enough to support a small-scale development project at the level of R40,000, nor do the technical resources ever typically permit a continued education, training, and monitoring program of the kind that this case received over a sustained period of about 10 years. An appraisal of decentralised people-centred development projects is rooted in a perspective that measures development success as the capacity to carry on and not as just immediate production gains (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985, p. 92).

A further conclusion that can be drawn from each of the cases in this study is the recognition (arising from the data) that development planning can no longer depend on programming processes that aggregate social and economic data to define the needs of the beneficiaries or to depend on expert opinion for designs (Korten & Alfonso, 1983). Instead, opinion is strong—and the data support this—that to achieve strong sustainable development, the specific characteristics of the target group in terms of their survival strategies, ecological setting, barriers to their development initiatives (Korten & Alfonso, 1985), and, above all, their indigenous knowledge forms must be mapped and understood

before planners can plunge headlong into broad development agendas and policies that might not be workable for all situations (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985).

On the basis of the foregoing, suggested in this thesis is a learning-process approach to development in general and to development management in particular, because both learning and development are dynamic processes. Once it has been established, as it was in the multipurpose, dairy-farming, and chicken-raising cases, that human-resources development and mobilisation are some of the key variables to sustainable development (Esman & Uphoff, 1991) it must also be realised that learning in the development enterprise can only be a mutual encounter for the project beneficiaries and the initiators. The encounter should comprise cultural sensitivity and mutual respect for each other's knowledge, because, as Collins (1991) argued, knowledge is not neutral. It seems that the only way that the points of view of those involved can be understood and accommodated is if development processes are characterised by dialogue. Emphasis on learning here does not point to formal learning only; instead, it is recommended that the project participants' existing knowledge, such as learning informally to manage their affairs and organise their social and economic relations, should be incorporated into the new organisational styles. If and when, for example, the groups are expected to keep records of their finances in written form, the culture of oralcy and other such indigenous practices must also be taken into account, because evidently they are not immediately displaced as the new set of values is introduced. When they need to be replaced, as the members indicated happens on occasion, that should be done through a long-term process approach which also accommodates previous cultural patterns. The data show that none of these old ways has been totally abandoned. They work alongside the advocated ways, which are, after all, largely not employed adequately. Pertinent too to the area of material resources and the related sociocultural factors was the members' concern for "commitment." They called for a partnership in participation in as far as financial and human resources are concerned. Honandle and Van Sant (1985) called this risk sharing in the development enterprise. The project members conceptualised the lack of risk sharing as reflective of an attitude of detachment in some of the members. They said that when people have not committed their resources into a project, *"Motho ha ore ke matla aka ana"/You don't say these are my resources [and as such I want to protect them]."* This is not meant just in material terms, but also with a sense of pride. Evidently, anything in which people have no sense of individual pride they lack commitment to, despite the rules imposed or the coercive power employed to make the activity work. To avoid this problem, it is recommended that attempts be made to apply

design procedures that are collaborative with the ultimate goal of building coalitions of local actors or the clients and the service providers such as governments and/or international development agencies in development management.

It is evident from the chicken-raising project that any strategies that try to bypass local action in terms of individual capacities, institutions, or practices pose as threats to sustained development. Any strategies that attempt to undermine the familiar styles or work in a contradictory way to the entrenched are suspiciously questioned at best and ignored at worst. When the multipurpose cooperative is further contrasted with the chicken-raising project, it becomes apparent that project sustainability neither emerges from quick stabs at the symptoms of major problems (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985), such as the quick injection of capital into a project to try to solve an economic problem without generating the local abilities to cover the costs of sustaining the project. On the basis of this observation, recommended strategies are long-term commitments that build on local experiences and knowledge forms and an application of increasing pressure on the causes of the problems (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985), with those benefiting from its solution fully involved in defining the problem and given the freedom to act on the basis of their experiences.

The peculiarity of each case further demonstrates that even at the national level development interventions should never be treated as technical architectural blueprints. They should instead be seen as action hypotheses subject to modification (Esman & Uphoff, 1991), because project management or social organisation does not take place in a vacuum. The data indicate that the shared norms and values, which are an important part of the project context, are central to project management. Participating in these projects are people with mutual obligations. The data also show that these obligations seem to be at the core of what people do in the projects. Evidence in the data suggests that despite the shared norms and values, the members are caught between the pursuit of individual economic goals and the social collective goals such as peace or cohesion in a community. This is where the flexibility of the funeral society becomes ideal. In fact, this case makes us doubt the relatively bureaucratic procedures that characterise projects such as the multipurpose cooperative and leads us to support development management that is based on informal processes. These processes are grounded on obligation and exchange relations typical of local rural environments. It is a generally shared view that authoritarian bureaucratic procedures induce underdevelopment and nurture dependency, because they are usually paternalistic, and they depend on models that lack the geocultural specificity that the data in this study indicate is necessary. The

chicken-raising project is a classic example of this assertion. It is evident from this case that, as Honandle and Van Sant (1985) observed, development is really about performance and not about bureaucracy building. It should also be about the fusion of ideas between beneficiaries or those in the client systems and those at the central level.

It is also evident from the data that the translation of sustainability (in development projects of the type studied in this research) into operational reality is still problematic (Korten & Alfonso, 1983). The glaring design deficiencies in the chicken-raising and the dairy-farming projects, with dependency as a major aspect, bear evidence of the above conclusion. In both cases the constraints were both financial and organisational, and no doubt these impeded local action. Again it is clear that what could account for the design deficiencies is a combination of factors. Prominent among these is the obvious lack of understanding and consideration of factors that pertain to what the researcher would call the projects' context or environment.

However, it is apparent that all development projects exist within national political and economic settings that affect their performance and potential (Honandle & Van Sant, 1985, p. 80). These environments are neither stable nor static. A useful example of the changing nature of the environments is the comments that men were said to make about their wives if they were elected to positions of responsibility in the groups. These comments are clearly based on the cultural stereotypes of what a woman's role in the family is or should be. This is a paradox because, in the process of societal change that emanates from institutional and societal orientations over which these women have no control (Pellow, 1983), the roles of women in this context have clearly been transformed, whereas the conflicting cultural expectations have stayed the same. These obviously irreconcilable economic and social issues are bound to exert pressure of a psychological nature on women, even at the level where they are to make decisions about whether to participate in these development activities and stay in them or not. For purposes of this discussion, three major aspects of the environment for the cases in this research have been assessed. These are the macro system, which is government and its structures; the social services infrastructure; and a third broad category, which is the sociocultural factors. Within the government system are bureaucratic structures, as was mentioned earlier in the dissertation, which are responsible for policy formulation and control. As these data indicate, the lines of operation (in the dairy project, for example) are not usually clear to the beneficiaries; neither does this help to improve their performance, nor is it conducive to the independent pursuit of local interests and incentives.

In the case of a poor country such as Lesotho, compounding the problems of contradictory policy and a centralised system of development management is the handicapped social-services infrastructure. Pertinent to this research are undeveloped local institutions that have responsibility for rural development and yet lack the resources to undertake the tasks efficiently. Unfortunately, these are the institutions to which the local people are used to appealing for help with their local organisational problems. If they are dysfunctional, then, according to social systems theory, the rest of the system will not function efficiently. Therefore, it is further recommended that the chieftaincy and Village Development Councils be strengthened so that they may serve the functions that they were set up to serve, which, among others, is to reinforce and reconcile mutually the old and the new systems of social organisation. Most significantly, the confusion over the power and responsibility lines of these two institutions needs to be cleared. Even though in this study questions were not asked about issues that could relate to the efficiency with which these institutions perform their functions, one of the issues that other studies raise in this connection is that of voluntarism (Sechaba Consultants, 1995). VDC members perceive the government's expectation that they will volunteer their services as evidence of its lack of recognition of this institution (Green, cited in Sechaba Consultants, 1995). The relationship between this lack of recognition and the fact that, on average, close to 80% of the VDC membership is female (Thoahlane, 1984) need to be explored. As well, in all the cases concern was expressed about the poor markets for the products from the projects in this study. Access to the markets (where there are any) was hindered by a poor system of communication and transportation. This made it very difficult for projects such as the chicken-raising project to reach services such as banks which are part of the new resource-management system. Aside from organisational styles, all of these factors are negative indicators of an environment conducive to sustainable development.

The important aspects of these sociocultural factors that need to be understood and taken into account in the design of these projects relate to voluntarism, communal ownership, gender, and kinship. There is an evident structural contradiction between the profit motive in the projects and the concept of voluntarism that does not seem reconcilable because, whereas volunteer work is a common cultural practice, the project members now have practical needs which they hope to address through the projects, such as the need for money. Most of these needs are products of the new value system. It was clear too from the way that voluntary work is organised in the projects that it no

longer conforms to the cultural type of voluntarism both in form and in purpose; the socioeconomic circumstances too seem to render voluntarism more and more redundant.

Problematic and related to the above is the idea of communal ownership of project assets, which is contradictory to the cultural practices in this society. The respondents articulated the problems associated with communal ownership such as "shared credit and willingness not to disgrace oneself if one goes it alone." It is recommended that a system be worked out where the two related issues—that is, voluntarism and communal ownership—can be accommodated in program design so that they will not continue to put project sustainability in jeopardy. Here the concept of "individually owned and collectively run" (but only in certain aspects, such as pooling labour, purchasing inputs together, or marketing collectively) seems worthy of developing. The development of a model close to the proposition made here could be based on the existing concept of *letsema,* the singular of *matsema,* or work parties. Members of the focus groups extensively compared *matsema* with cooperatives as they see them now. One member even said that, to him, cooperatives were *"work parties in disguise (dairy)/ke matsema a tlisoa ka santhao,"* implying that *some* of the aspects that the work parties share with cooperatives were highly regarded.

The members' comparison distinctly underlined some of these aspects about work parties. First, they observed that in a work party some of the major things being pooled are labour and tools. However, unlike in a cooperative, the problematic area of collective ownership does not exist. Secondly, they pointed out that in work parties organising the activity is the responsibility of a person or a family and not that of many people, as is the case in a cooperative. In the members' opinion, this minimised the problem of internal human relations. This is especially because, thirdly, in a work party the interaction or activity is a one-time event, and interactions among members are not over an extended period of time. As a result, there is very limited concern or struggle over power, control, socioeconomic benefits, authority, and democratic processes.

Most interesting, and maybe most pertinent, was the issue raised about goals within the two organisational forms. The members said that in a work party, once the task has been accomplished, people go their separate ways. Crucial to this analysis is the fact that in a work party there is one specific goal to be met, whereas in the collective activities studied in this research, there were usually several goals. This seems to make attempts to focus very difficult. Accentuating the problem of focus in these new forms of cooperatives is the fact that in pursuit of these numerous goals, the members are also drawing on skill areas that they are only just developing; whereas, in contrast, in a

letsema participants brought into the work situation skills that they already had. If not, others would be ready to teach them on the job, because knowledge (as the members continually underlined) was free. Special focus on this traditional form of communal organisations indicates that in these members' view, local indigenous knowledge exists and should form a basis for collaborative development management. The apparent existence of local knowledge and its sustained use in the management of development in this context further shows that sources of knowledge for development are multiple, and it is recommended that they be recognised equally. Whenever possible, they should be used to reinforce each other in pursuit of sustainable development. The members of the dairy-farming case explicitly said that change (which was used interchangeably with development) will serve a good purpose and be sustained *"if it takes them to where the rest of the world is going without changing their being/Ha feela e sa fetole boleng ba rona."* The same view was echoed by the chicken-raising group when they said that they would not tell anyone if they saw someone taking something away, because that would jeopardise group cohesion. Implied was that this was contrary to the rules, where, if the project were to work, they were to report such incidents. The traditional practice suggests dishonesty, but in fact the members explained that in their culture, *"Letsoalo ke molisa oa motho/Only people's consciences can police them,"* and they are comfortable with this approach.

It is apparent that, despite the problems discussed here, the viability of the fundamental idea of accomplishing tasks through collective modes is not being doubted. Therefore, the research recommends that it be strengthened. This idea has been backed by the literature on empowerment as one of the alternative planning approaches discussed earlier in the thesis. In this approach Young (1993) argued that women become empowered through collective reflection and the building up of group cohesion. Incidentally or by design, collectivity exists in the contexts of the projects studied here; what is needed is in-depth research that aims at further understanding the potential of collectivity as a strategy for women's sustainable development, combined with strengthening group cohesion.

To the researcher, collective empowerment in this context means women extending the boundaries of their empowerment process beyond collectivities as studied in this research and spreading them to country-wide groupings. In this way and through the new alliances, they can exert pressure and have more and stronger influence on government to create real change. This perspective of course has political undertones

which could make it much more difficult to apply, but it is a challenge that women have to face. This brings us, lastly, to gender as an issue of interest in this research.

Gender Issues and Project Sustainability

This thesis, like most of the strands of feminist critique as well as the alternative perspectives to women's programs (WID, WAD, GAD, and Empowerment), calls for efforts by development planners in general and those in Lesotho in particular to make women's lives and ways of knowing and organising (as discussed in the data) the beginning points of development analysis. This is because, as the literature on women in development has argued—and the researcher shares the same view based on the data studied and personal experience—women are not the object of development analyses, but *active* actors (Ferguson; cited in Staudt, 1990).

Gender is an issue in these projects and in their sustainability. For project activities that take place outside the homestead—which in itself is contradictory to the traditional organisation of work for women, where, except for work in the fields and other activities such as collecting firewood, fetching water, and so on, almost everything that was considered work took place in the household)—the women in the chicken-raising project in particular articulated the problem of gendered patterns of division of labour. They pointed out that in the project they performed tasks that they would otherwise have had their menfolk do if the work site had been at home. This made the projects even more burdensome in addition to their other family responsibilities and made participation in development difficult. So women's access to labour and the usual patterns of division of labour were restructured by their engagement in the projects.

For example, they said that they could go to work at the project site only in the late mornings when they returned from the fields. Yet, the eggs from the chickens that they reared needed to be gathered and the cleaning had to be done first thing in the morning. They would return from the fields to find that a large number of eggs had been broken, which meant a loss for their business. Therefore, they had to reorganise their time-management strategies to fit the demands of the project. It can be concluded that a lack of accommodation of these patterns of women's labour in this context in the project designs indicates that project planners experienced difficulty in dealing with the realities of women's triple role.

Accentuating this as a threat to project sustainability is the planners' continuing tendency to assume that a household is a united front. For example, the data indicate

that family resource-management strategies in all the cases posed a problem and a threat to project sustainability. This is because of indications that women in this society have limited access to income and employment (hence their involvement in these income-generating activities), and they also have limited control of the resources that might exist in the family. Consequently, they would not freely use family resources, including their labour, to contribute to the projects.

The interplay between income earned by other means and that earned from projects, where there is any, and the issue of control over these incomes within the household settings needs to be studied and understood so that viable resource-management strategies are made an integral part of the design of these projects. This is especially necessary in this context where, as feminist writers have always argued, the family is full of contradictions. The family is the seat of women's oppression, disempowerment, struggle, and resistance; but it is also the seat of practices contributing to social cohesion (Bazilli, 1991, p. 10). As well, it is the centre of social organisation, especially for productive activity, reproduction, and community maintenance.

Evidently, in the context of Lesotho, this institution has been violently affected by the migrant labour system, which is a crucial part of this country's modernisation process. However, the project designs and their inherent organisational strategies do not take this into account. Instead, they are still based on specific conceptions of the family which are no longer true; for instance, the idea of a household head being male, whereas an estimated total of 60-70% of households are headed by women (Young, 1982). These families are not only headed by women, but they are also getting smaller, which means less access to labour for those who stay behind—mostly women. Yet cultural notions such as the one mentioned earlier which said that *"a mother holds a knife at the sharp edge/Mangoana o tsoara thipa ka bohaleng,"* are still upheld.

The researcher firmly believes that it is the manifestation of these biological reductionist types of stereotypes (Ackelsberg; in Bookman & Morgen, 1988) which makes it difficult for development planners, first, to understand the impact of the roles of women in the family on development initiatives and, secondly, to see women in the development scene as much more than just mothers defending the needs and interests of their children. As a result, they continue to see women's participation in projects such as those studied in this thesis as only an expression of their capacities as mothers rather than as participation by equal people who just happen to be women (Ramphele; cited in Bazilli, 1991, p. 10).

Unfortunately, these stereotypes are deeply entrenched in the family, whereas the data show that the multiple roles of women are everyday realities (Ostergaard, 1992); and overlooking, misconceiving, underdocumenting, and undervaluing these multiple roles are omissions that render projects unsustainable long before they are even started. This observation compels us to underscore as pivotal to development the need to understand women's position in the family and the structural bases for the values that underlie the perpetuation of that position. If these are not recognised, it will continue to be difficult to design sustainable development projects for and with women. As many authors have conceded—and the researcher concurs—the field of family relations is one on which Africans construct the foundations of the rest of their social lives (Nhlapo; cited in Bazilli, 1991, p. 13)—social lives that are so intertwined with economics, politics, and even religion.

In addition to hopes to contribute economically to their family incomes through profits from the projects, the women have explicitly mentioned strategic needs that they wanted to meet. Central among these was a wish to boost their socioeconomic status in relation to that of their husbands, who have better employment opportunities. To meet this strategic interest the women said that they felt pressured to have material and concrete evidence for their involvement in the projects. This makes savings for future reinvestment difficult in the short or even the long run. On the other hand, women are aware that not symbolising the worth of their participation in the projects in material terms would further demean it, and this would spill over to their already lower status in relation to that of their husbands (Pellow, 1983), who in this context have the opportunity to enhance their status, power, and control further through mine-labour earnings.

These are women who all along thought that they knew their culture and their role in society well enough to fit without any conflicts (Pellow, 1983), and all of a sudden they see the importance of the cultural indicators of their status—such as marital status, age, or the number of their children—being undermined in the changing value system. All of these are very dynamic historical and socioeconomic processes that go far beyond the boundaries of Lesotho as a country and need to be researched and understood as broader issues. It is fair to conclude that when this contradictory situation prevails, development clearly becomes a more stressful experience for women.

To offset this dilemma of cooperative conflicts within the household, it is recommended that the design features of the development projects have an incentive structure that would accommodate the unique position of women but also increase the chances of project sustainability by relying heavily on women's existing capacities and

experiences. For example, the benefits of the projects could be more immediate if the loans did not have to be repaid as soon as production had started. Women could be given a chance to reaffirm with their families the importance of their participation in the projects for at least an extended period before they started repaying the loans. These are complex policy issues that extend their boundaries far beyond the analysis of a thesis.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, kinship and its pertinence to the resolution of conflict as the common concern across the cases deserves special attention. In all the focus groups and in all the cases as well as in the individual interviews, it was pointed out that projects are not sustainable because of human relations problems, among other reasons. Some form of conflict always exists among the project members over various aspects of the project. Where people work or live together, there is bound to be misunderstanding or differences in views. What is pertinent to this analysis is how conflict arises and is subsequently managed, and how that relates to project sustainability. The evidence suggests that in all the projects (perhaps less so for the dairy, which did not proceed), conflict, in the members' perceptions, is an unhealthy aspect of each project's life. The project participants were all conscious of this and articulated it as such. All the accounts showed how attempts were made to resolve conflicts. The conclusion is that in most cases it stayed unresolved and led to project collapse as people dropped out.

Attempts to understand why conflicts were not resolved point to several issues. Prominent among these, in the researcher's view, is kinship. For projects such as those with formal constitutions (the multipurpose and the dairy-farming), the rules are straightforward on how to deal with conflict. Observations indicate that the rules are hardly ever applied; a good example is in dealing with the loans. Why they are not applied is tightly knit with the fact that people are either closely related or they are friends or neighbours. The respondents clearly stated in the multipurpose and the chicken-raising cases that they would not want to be the ones to start an antagonistic situation and that they also could not risk their lifelong relations over a project whose future was not even certain. These mutual obligations are the core of social organisation in this context. Therefore, whereas organising development initiatives along kinship lines, incidentally or deliberately, is a positive thing in some instances, in others it is not. The project participants involved in this contradictory situation have indicated their reluctance to sacrifice their entrenched values, such as peace, over a project. What this points to is an organisational strategy whereby the conflicts will be resolved and the loans repaid without confrontation. Whatever mechanism is worked out, it is suggested that

the members' input be solicited in the design of the mechanism so that when it does not work, project members would be more prepared to participate in its further remodelling, because, as some authors have suggested and the data show, development planning and management is a learning process, and it is about commitment. Therefore it does not or cannot work with blueprints because it is time and context bound. This study reflects that project designs should respond to changing socioeconomic and political situations, as should planning and management strategies.

Summary of Key Policy and Research Recommendations

To ensure sustainable development in Lesotho, especially with women and women's groups as the primary participants in development projects, the following recommendations have been highlighted from a number made earlier in the thesis.

1. Educational policies and plans at the project level must be decentralised and participatory in approach; and in addition to technical dimensions of the project activity, they must include critical social awareness at both the cultural and structural levels.

2. On the basis of ongoing and extensive research, the educational components of projects must be structurally reformed so that they reflect deliberate efforts to employ education as an empowering tool and not as an agent of social control, marginalisation, dependency, and cultural invasion.

3. Collective organisational forms for project management and problem solving which are culturally sensitive and attuned to sociostructural realities in the communities need to be developed as part of the overall rural development in the country.

4. Reliance on local resources—human and material—must be the fundamental principle which guides the development of project organisational styles that are flexible, accommodative, and reflective of the intersections between the use of resources and cultural factors in development.

5. It is recommended that a collaborative and dialogical policy be developed that emphasises mutual respect for differing sociocultural factors between the external national and international development system and the communities themselves and that adopts a learning-process approach to development.

6. Research must be conducted on the potential role of the local institutions, such as the village development councils and local chieftainships (responsible for serving as

part of the local infrastructure for development), and the inherent structural contradictions that are experienced as society changes.

7. It is recommended that a gender-responsive rural development policy that is grounded on the principles of human rights and social justice and consistently gives priority to gender aspects of development be developed in Lesotho. Such a policy would need to speak to the disadvantages faced by women in both historic cultural patterns and new patterns being introduced through modernization.

8. Research must be undertaken to obtain accurate data disaggregated by gender and making use of concepts which adequately address the nature of the family and the household in Lesotho and the position of women in these institutions.

Tables and Figures

Table 1

A Summary of Lesotho's Population Since 1936

HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF LESOTHO'S POPULATION				
Census Year	De Facto Population in 000s	IntercensalRate of Growth (% p.a.)	De Jure population in 000s	Intercensal Rate of Growth (% p.a.)
1936	562	0.80	661	1.30
1946	564	0.04	689	0.40
1956	642	1.30	794	1.40
1966	852	2.90	968	2.00
1976	1064	2.25	1217	2.31
1986	1331	2.27	1605	2.81
Source: Lesotho Government, Bureau of Statistics 1987a, 1991a, 1991b,& 1992				

Source: UNICEF. (1994). *Situation analysis of women and children in Lesotho.* Maseru: Author (p. 2).

Table 2

Main Economic Indicators of Lesotho

AGGREGATE INDICATORS FOR THE LESOTHO ECONOMY								
	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Population (millions)	1.5	1.59	1.62	1.66	1.7	1.75	1.83	1.89
Annual Inflation rate	17.7	16.1	11.4	14.0	14.3	9.1	19.5	19.4
Current Price Figures								
GDP (million Maloti)	551	631	753	1027	1299	1509	1739	2026
GNP (million Maloti)	1065	1215	1459	1857	2227	2611	2978	3319
Imports (million Maloti)	765	835	993	1376	1558	1850	2372	2810
GDP per person (Maloti)	367	397	4[illegible]	619	764	862	948	1072
GNP per person (Maloti)	710	764	901	1118	1310	1492	1624	1756
Above Adjusted to 1980 Prices								
GDP (million Maloti)	308	314	330	373	417	438	445	449
GNP (million Maloti)	572	564	595	655	669	694	685	669
Imports (millio...	388	354	379	466	470	443	491	498
GDP per person (Maloti)	205	198	204	225	245	250	243	237
GNP per person (Maloti)	381	354	367	394	393	397	374	354
Bureau of Statistics, 1993								

Source: UNICEF. (1994). *Situation analysis of women and children in Lesotho.* Maseru: Author (p. 23).

Table 3

Selected Economic and Financial Indicators in Percentages

Fiscal Year	88/89	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93 (Preliminary)
Annual Nominal Change in Workers Remittances	(1.1)	4.8	10.8	(0.6)	14.3
Annual Nominal Change in Government Expenditure	23.7	20.8	6.5	17.8	10.7
Workers Remittances as % of GNP	44.5	42.0	41.3	39.2	38.6
Government Expenditure as % of GNP	32.7	33.2	29.9	31.2	30.0
External Debt as % of GNP	35.2	33.5	32.9	33.6	35.9
Debt Service Ratio (in % of Exports of Goods & Services)	4.1	4.2	3.9	3.8	4.2
Customs Revenue as % of Total Government Revenue	52.4	50.2	56.4	51.7	53.7

Source: UNICEF. (1994). *Situation analysis of women and children in Lesotho.* Maseru: Author (p. 25).

Table 4

A Statistical Table on Basotho Miners in South Africa: Trends Between 1986 and 1993

Year	Number Employed	Average Wage (Maloti)	Deferred Pay (Maloti)	Change %	Remittance Payments (Maloti)	Change %
1986	121 450	5 136	178 594	26	104 776	13
1987	125 934	7 160	188 568	6	124 354	19
1988	124 781	7 598	210 932	12	166 127	34
1989	126 264	8 679	242 139	15	190 445	15
1990	127 386	10 069	239 934	-1	233 509	23
1991	122 188	11 327	160 308	-50	107 987	-54
1992	119 596	12 321	137 809	-14	91 891	-15
1993	113 555	13 359	169 633	23	83 991	-9

Source: UNICEF. (1994). *Situation analysis of women and children in Lesotho.* Maseru: Author (p. 26).

Table 5

A Summary of Facts About Cases in the Study

CASE	PROJECT LIFE	STATUS	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	MEMBER-SHIP	MEMBER BY GENDER %	SUSTAIN-ABILITY	EXTERNAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	EXTERNAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	CONTACT WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS
Multi	12 years	Registered multi-purpose cooperative	. Poultry keeping . Sewing training . Homegardens and other agricultural activities	80	99.9% Female	Yes	USCC 40,000 . LANFE . WORLDVISION . AGRIC	. Ministry of Agriculture . LCCUL . IEMS . LANFE . Rural Dev.	. Local Banks . Government Ministries . International Funding Agencies and others - USCC - LANFE - World Vision - ABF - DVV . Ministry of Works . Chieftainship . VDC
Funeral	7 years	Informal	Funeral Services	90	95% Female	Yes	NONE	NONE	. National Abbatoirs . Chieftainship . Local Bank
Dairy	2 years	Registered Agricultural Cooperative	Dairy Production	20	70% Female	No	NONE	. Ministry of Agriculture LCCUL	ADF LADB LDTC Ministry of Agric /Coops LCCUL
Chickens	2 years	Informal	. Poultry Keeping . Handcrafts	15	100% Female	No	US PEACE CORPS	. Ministry of Agriculture Cooperatives . IEMS	Egg Circle LCCUL . Ministry of Agriculture IEMS PEACE CORPS . VDC . Rural Development

Figures

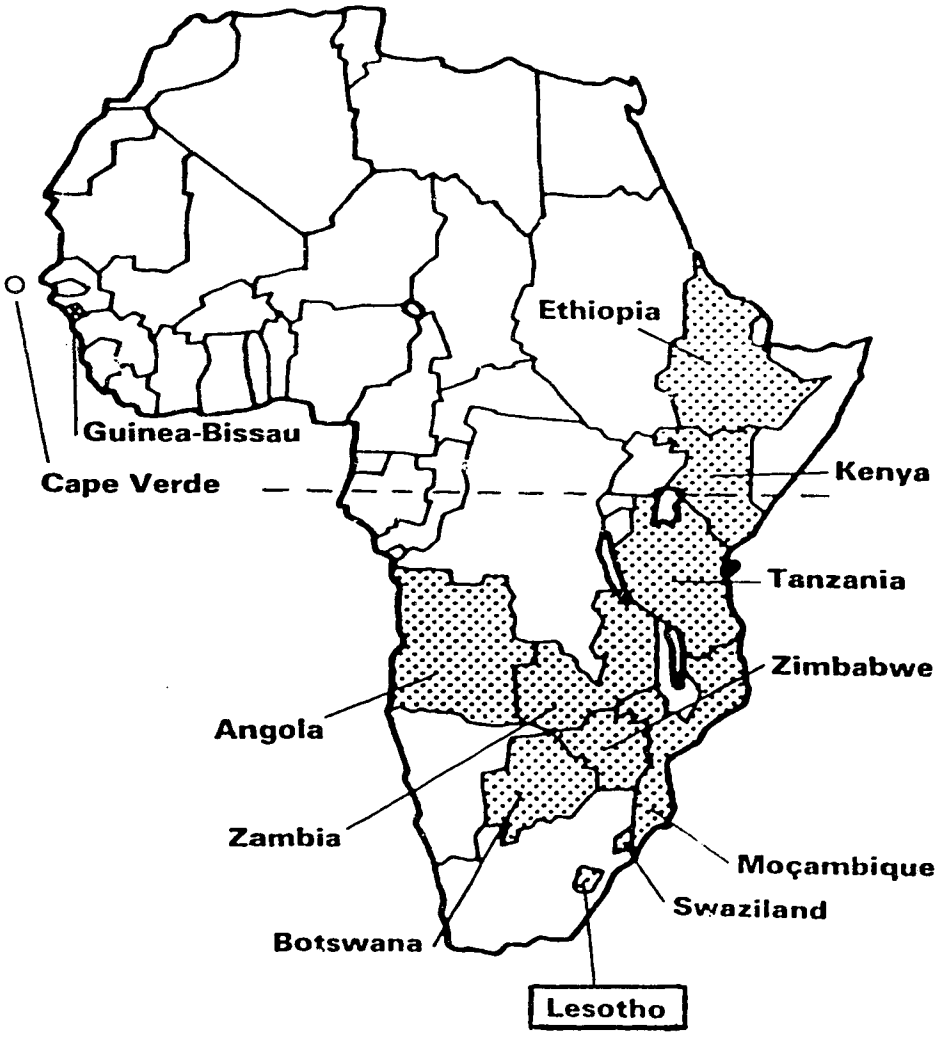

Figure 1. Map of Africa showing the position of Lesotho within the Southern Africa region (Himmelstrand & Bickham, 1985, p. 189).

LESOTHO

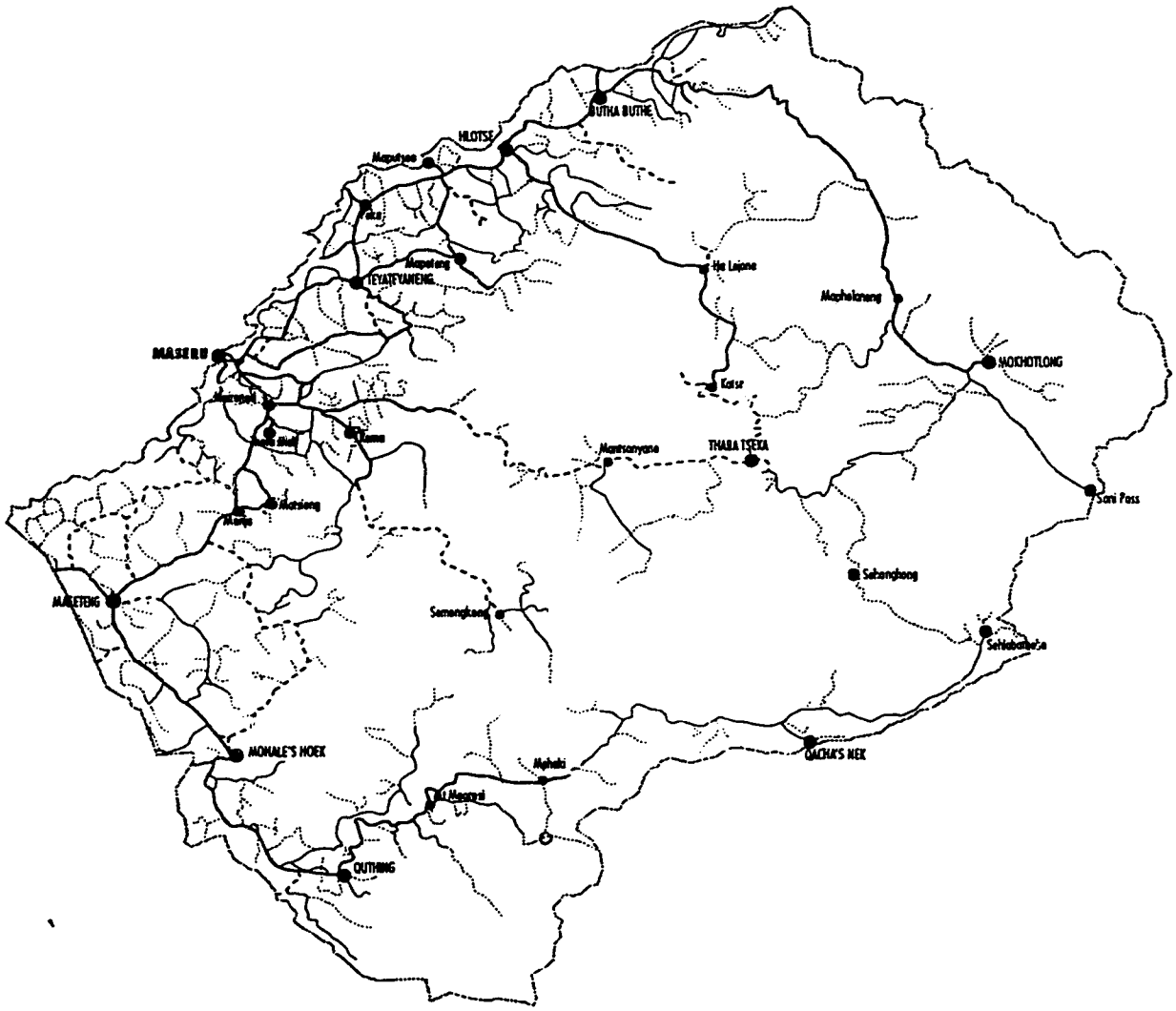

Figure 2. Map of Lesotho showing districts and major town centres (UNICEF, 1994, p. 1)

Figure 3. A Mosotho girl carrying a younger sibling on her back (as part of socialisation into her female cultural role; UNICEF, 1994, p. 125).

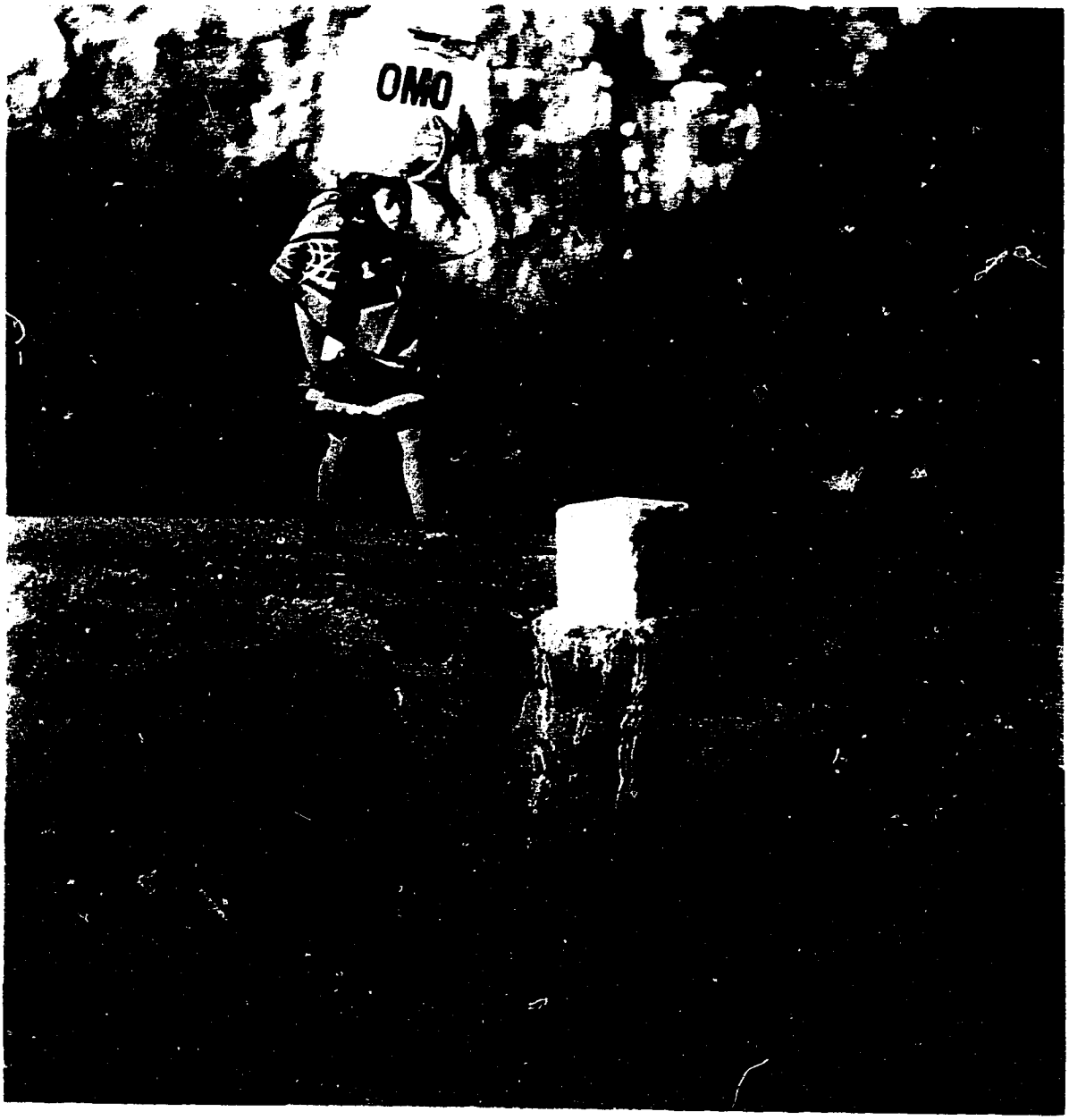

Figure 4. A Mosotho woman walking some distance to transport goods, probably from a major town centre (UNICEF, 1994, p. 132).

Figure 5. A Mosotho woman weeding in the field (UNICEF, 1994, p. 118).

Figure 6. A Masotho woman carrying a bucket of water from a distant water source is one of the main household responsibilities for Basotho women (UNICEF, 1994, p. 242).

Figure 7. A woman in masonry as part of her income-generating activities (UNICEF, 1994, p. 193).

Figure 8. A woman street vendor covering her head to protect her from the rain (UNICEF, 1994, p. 228).

Figure 9. A Mosotho woman stirring a sorghum mixture in preparation of home-brewed beer as part of income generation or for a family celebration/feast (Sechaba Consultants, 1995, p. 10).

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